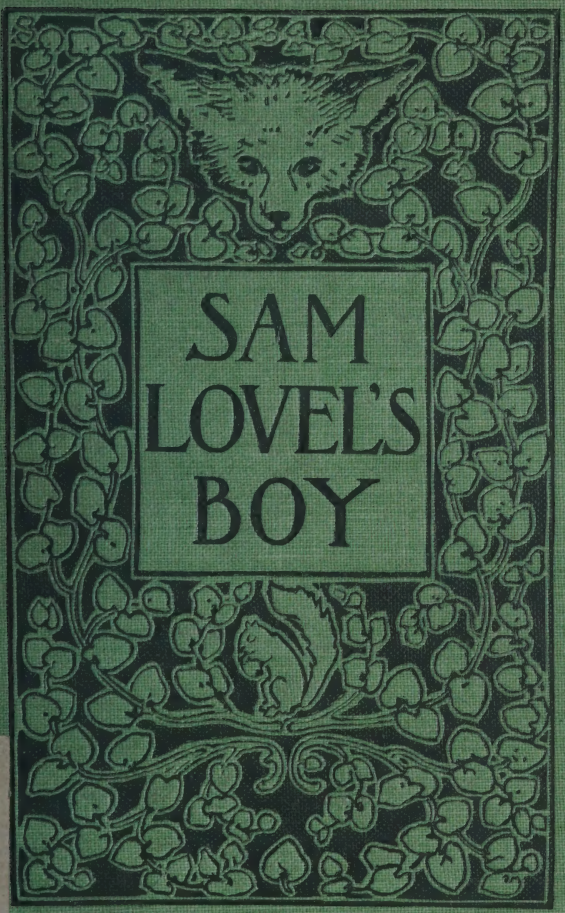

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BY

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BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN AND COMPANY
The Riverside Press, Cambridge
1901

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SAM LOVEL'S BOY

CHAPTER I

NAMING THE BOY

"Naow, Bub, he come here, an' le' me comb his hair," said Huldah Lovel, seating herself in a rocking-chair and settling restfully against the high back, holding a comb in one hand and a brush in the other, wherewith she tapped lightly on the polished arms to further attract the attention of her three-year-old son. He was so busily engaged in the construction of a corncob house that he only heard as in a dream his mother's call, till it was more imperatively repeated, and his father, sitting astride a pod auger on a wooden-bottomed chair, shelling seed corn into a washtub, tossed a cob lightly against the child's back and said with cheerful brevity, —

"Come, hyper, Bub."

Then the little boy began to rise reluctantly, slowly getting his chubby legs under him, and while yet on all fours, protesting, "Bub don't want him hair comb. Pull, it do."

"Why, yes he does, Bub, tew, wanter hev his hair all slick," said Aunt Jerusha Peggs, removing her eyes from the stocking she was narrowing, and regarding him with smiling benignity over the rims of her spectacles. "It looks ju' like a maouse nes' made aouten corn silks, naow. He do' wanter hev the mice think it 's their'n, I know he don't."

"Course he don't, an' mother won't pull," Huldah assured him, adding, "not no mor'n she c'n help. My sakes, Bub," she exclaimed, as she drew him toward her and cast a despairing glance on his tangled flaxen poll, "it 's jest a mess o' witch knots!" The boy shut his eyes and set his milk teeth with heroic resolution.

"Bub, Bub, Bub!" Sam repeated with disgusted emphasis as he detached another of the ears from the braid of their own husks and began crunching off the kernels on the

auger. "By the gre't horn spoon! that boy 'll grow up nothin' but Bub fust we know. He 's got tu be named, that 's sartin."

"I know it," Huldah sighed, pulling at a snarled lock of finest flax. "We 've got tu, I know, but haow be we a-goin' tu?"

The pain of the present infliction, in spite of the careful, motherly hand, and the mysterious terrors of that which impended were too much for the child's fortitude to withstand, and he lifted up his voice in a protest that ascended to a piteous wail: —

"Me don't want be name. It hurt I."

His mother laughed at his absurd fear, and his father, rasping a red seed ear savagely on the auger, wondered "why in tunket he wa'n't named afore he knew it."

But Aunt Jerusha cried out in her tenderest voice: —

"There, there, he shan't be named nothin' 'at 'll hurt him, dear heart! Why, don't he know 'at ev'rybody an' ev'rything hes tu hev a name? Why, there 's the ol' haoun' dawg, his name 's Drive; and the ol' rhuster, he 's ol' Red; and there 's the hens,

ol' Cropple-craown an' ol' High Head, an' Double-cackle, an' Rose-comb, an' Goose Face ; and there 's the caows, Ol' Calerco an' Young Calerco, an' Spot and Line Back, an' I d' know what all, and the oxen, Broad an' Bright. My land! he wants to hev a name as much as a dumb critter."

The little boy stopped crying to listen, and in the interval of silence the familiar, imperative thump of Gran'ther Hill's staff resounded on the threshold, and as his thin shadow partially darkened the open doorway his dry, cracked voice entered before him.

"Lord a'mighty, Huldy Pur'n't'n ! be you a-skelpin' that 'ere young un? If ye be, you 'd better take the boocher knife an' du it decent, Injun fashion, 'stid o' rakin' on't off wi' a hetchel."

"No, not ezackly, Cap'n Hill. Come right in an' sed daown," said Huldah cordially, as she hastily beat up the cushion of an easy-chair for the visitor.

"Yes, you be tew. You need n't tell me," turning his attention to Huldah and the boy after bestowing a "Hope I see ye well" on Aunt Jerusha and a nod on Sam.

"I hearn the poppoose holler, an' I seen you at it, a-sawin' an' a-clawin', reg'lar squaw fashi'n. Come here, Bub, an' le' me show yer marm haow." The child trudged over to the grim veteran, as if assured that no worse could befall him at his hands than he was now suffering. "Ju' look at that, will ye?" Gran'ther Hill chuckled. "Thet 'ere boy 's got disarnment. Any o' aour folks would ha' told ye 'at they 'd ruther be handled by Injins than squaws. Take a holt o' a han'f'l o' hair julluck that, an' — quk" — He gathered the hair of the child's crown and using his forefinger as a knife he made the motion of scalping, accompanying it with a sound made in his cheek. "Oh, I seen the divils du it, an' I seen jes' sech hair as this 'ere a-hangin' on poles over the' wigwams. Blast 'em!"

"Oh," Huldah shuddered, "ain't it awful? No, Cap'n Hill, we was talkin' 'baout namin' of him, an' it scairt him."

"Wal, it hain't no wonder, if you 're a-goin' tu give him sech infarnal names some folks hes, an' as many on 'em. By the Lord Harry! I 'd as li'ves be shot an'

skelped tew as tu hev some on 'em fired at me, an' piled a-top on me. You le' me take him daown tu the brook, an' I 'll babtize him wi' one good solid name 'at he need n't be 'shamed on, — Seth er Remember er Peleg er Ethan mebby, arter Warner er Baker er Sunderlan' er Allen. I 'd name him arter myself if it wa'n't for me an' Jozeff's boy bein' raound an' gittin' mixed up wi' him. Josier Lovel 'd saound almighty well."

"So it would, Cap'n Hill," said Sam, "an' he might be praoud on't. But I never hed no gre't idee o' givin' gre't folkses names tu child'n that like 's not 'll turn aout mighty small pertaters. I guess we 'd better name him arter some o' aour own folks."

"You need n't be afeard o' him. He 's a mighty good un, consid'rin'. Don't ye name him Prosper, though, for the shif'lessest man I ever see was named Prosper; ner Noble, ner no sech. But you 'll make a mess on't anyway. Me an' Huldy 'll 'tend tu namin' on him."

Aunt Jerusha laid her knitting in her lap, and assisted meditation with slow sniffs at a

pinch of snuff before she said, "Wal, I allus thought it was a pooty good way tu git a name, tu jest open the Bible an' pick the fust one you come tu."

"Good Lord!" cried Gran'ther Hill, "some on 'em 'ould kill a young un o' his age! They must ha' be'n tough ol' critters tu ha' kerried sech names as some on 'em."

"They was good folks," said Aunt Jerusha, resuming her knitting.

"They was, hey? Haow do you know they was? Was you 'quainted wi' 'em? Wha' 'd you know 'baout 'em? You can't tell nothin' 'baout folks by what you hearn tell on 'em. You got tu live wi' 'em. They won't stan' it. Come, Huldy, what be we a-goin' tu name the young un? You do' want 'im strung on tu a name longer 'n he is, du ye?"

"I allers thought I sh'd like tu give him the name o' some o' aour folks; but Sam's is the only one 'at I like, an' Sam he won't hev it that," Huldah answered, drawing the boy to her knee again and caressing his elf locks in abstraction.

"No, sir," said her husband; "one Sam

in the fam'ly 's enough. Your Sams don't never 'maount tu much anyway."

"You don't never want tu say that afore anybody 'at fit tu Plattsburgh!" cried Uncle Lisha, appearing at the inner door of the shop, wherein till now he had been an unseen listener. "Aour ol' bear-fightin' V'mont gin'al's name was Samwel."

"An' so was yer gran'sir's, Sam," Gran'ther Hill supplemented, "an' he was consid'able of a man, I tell ye. He killed a painter oncte, — plugged him right 'twixt the eyes as slick as ever ye see."

"I should like to name him Timothy," said Sam; "it 'ould please father wonderful."

"Please yer Aunt Isaac!" said the veteran contemptuously. "Why don't ye name him H'ardsgrass? It allers makes me think on't. He hain't green. Red Top 'ould come as nigh, for he 's light complected."

"His hair hain't one particle o' red in 't, Cap'n Hill," Huldah protested with earnestness as she fondly stroked the child's hair, and said in a softer tone, "I 'd ruther hev him named Samwel 'an anything else."

"It 'll du better 'n Timerthy," Gran'ther Hill conceded.

"It 's a good name, an' good men has bore it," Uncle Lisha cordially assented, and added, with an affectionate glance at Sam, "an' one does yet."

"An' he 'll be little Sam till he 's taller 'n I be, er it 'll be young Sam an' ol' Sam," said Sam, impatiently tossing away a naked cob and breaking another ear from the braid. "Le' 's call him Timothy an' be done with it."

"Me do' want er be gran'pa!" the child whimpered shrilly.

"Shet yer head!" Gran'ther Hill whistled hoarsely, glowering upon the boy. "You hain't no more to say 'baout it 'an if you was gittin' a spankin'. If you 're a good boy an' keep yer head shet you won't be nob'dy's gran'pa for forty year." And having comforted the scared child with this assurance, he addressed the parents: "You might call him Tom, arter aour ol' Gov'ner Chittenden. He was a clear quill, an' could see furder wi' his one eye 'an most could wi' tew. An' it 's a chunky name."

"If we was goin' aout o' the fam'ly I sh'd like Lisher best of any," and Huldah looked toward Aunt Jerusha for support.

The old woman gave a little gasp of surprise and pleasure and smiled serenely upon both mother and child, but before she could speak her approval Uncle Lisha shouted: "Good airth an' seas, don't ye du it! It 's hopesin he 'll make a better man 'an his ol' Uncle Lisher."

"If he makes half as good a one I shall be glad," said Sam heartily.

"Lisher 's good 'nough," said Gran'ther Hill. "Good Lord! anything 's better 'n these new-fangled Don Cairloses an' Pederos an' Ju Anns an' the divil knows what all. I cal'late they name the childern arter their Merryner rams. When I was raised they" — He stopped short and turned with nervous haste from the window through which he was gazing reflectively over the greening May landscape. "Good land, le' 's name him quick an' not tortur' him no longer! Here 's a silver dollar o' my last pension money, an' we 'll toss it up for a name. What 'll ye say? Quick! Thunder an' guns, why don't ye speak?"

"I do' know but it 's as good 's any way," Sam said after a minute's hesitation; "go ahead, if Huldy 's willin'."

"Why, yes, if it 'll only be Samwel," said she, laughing nervously.

"All right," cried the old man, "heads, it 's Tim; tails, it 's Sam! Here, Lisher, you tos't, and tos't fair."

"It 's tew bad a-chancin' of the precious creatur's name that way," Aunt Jerusha protested.

"Go 'long wi' your nonsense, Jerushy Peggs. 'T ain't no more chance 'an your way."

"But the hand o' the Lord 'ould be in that," she said.

"Let her fly!" the veteran commanded, and Uncle Lisha, poising the coin on his thumb, flipped it to the ceiling. As it fell all gathered eagerly around it.

"It 's heads!" Sam shouted triumphantly.

"Stan' back," Gran'ther Hill commanded; "nob'dy picks it up only you, Lisher."

Uncle Lisha adjusted his spectacles, and got down on all fours to inspect the piece. "Wal, it is heads!" he declared.

"An' his name is Timerthy," continued Gran'ther Hill. "Ary one was good 'nough, an' I don't care, so long 's he 's got one on 'em sure."

"Oh, dear, it 's too bad," Huldah groaned, "I did want to hev his name Samwel so!"

"Wal, if you feel so bad 'baout it, you c'n call him Sam an' I c'n call him Tim. Timothy Samwel. Haow 'll that du?" Sam cried.

"Yes, yes, all right, on'y settle on't quick!" cried Gran'ther Hill excitedly. "Will ye hev it that way? Say, quick!"

"We c'n both call him Bub just the same, only that won't be his name," Sam urged, and Huldah consented.

"There, by the Lord Harry, he 's named," the old ranger shouted exultantly, and shook his staff at the window, "an' the' can't nob'dy help it naow! His gran'marm 's a-comin', an' if she 'd got here time 'nough, jest as like 's not she 'd ha' named him Eunice in spite on us."

Mrs. Purington's heavy step and labored breathing were now heard at the back door, where she presently entered and stood a mo-

ment curiously surveying the now silent group.

"Wal," she asked with cheerful severity, "be you a-hevin' a Quaker meetin'? If I 'd ha' knowed I was comin' tu one, I 'd ha' fetched Joel Bartlett an' Jemimy along."

"Why, no, mother, not ezackly," Huldah answered, rising and offering her chair to the visitor, while the brush and comb spilled from her lap with a loud clatter. Then, when no one else would speak, she continued with some hesitation, "We be'n a-namin' Bub."

Mrs. Purington strove to arrest her descent into the chair, but knees and elbows slowly gave way and she sank into it with a gasping sigh. Then, drawing in material for another sigh, she regarded her daughter with open-eyed, gaping incredulity.

"Yes," said Huldah in a spirited voice, "we named him Timothy Samwel, an' I say it 's a real nice name. Don't you, mother?"

"It 's an almighty good name," Gran'ther Hill cried, emphasizing the confirmation with a thump of his staff, "on'y there 's twicte too much on't!"

"An' you 've be'n an' named that child," sighed Mrs. Purington, "an' not said one word on't to the on'y gran'ma he 's got or ever likely tu hev, an' not knowin' 'at the' ever 'll be another boy tu name! Not me nor one o' my folks mentioned in it oncte, nor yet a Pur'n't'n, which I sh'ld think you 'd all be 'shamed o' yourselves a-comin' in incouragin' sech duin's, but you hain't, not one on ye." She cast a watery glare upon the whole company, but resolutely withheld her tears while she hurriedly groped in her deep pocket for her handkerchief and bottle of hartshorn.

"That 'ere 's tarnal harnsome seed corn you 're shellin'," Gran'ther Hill remarked; "twelve rowed, hain't it?"

Sam nodded an affirmative.

"Talkin' 'baout seed corn at sech a time, when an immortal soul 's be'n gi'n a name!" Mrs. Purington exclaimed in a voice smothered by emotion and her handkerchief. "An' sech a name! Timerthy Sammywel Lovel! Not a Pur'n't'n nor a Borden mentioned! Jest clear Lovel!"

"Wal, Lovel 's his name," said Sam.

"An' his natur', I hope, makin' my manners tu his mother," Gran'ther Hill added. "You take this 'ere dollar, Lovel, an' punch a hole in 't an' hev the boy wear it raound his neck, for tu make him remember his name."

"He 'd ortu forgit it. Timerthy Sammywel! If that hain't a name!"

"You keep a-sayin' on't over long 'nough an' you 'll git wonted to 't," Gran'ther Hill chuckled maliciously.

"Me git wonted to 't! I won't never call him it, you see 'f I du."

"Call him Samerthy Timuwel if it 'll make it seem any better tu ye. I da' say his father 'n' mother won't care so long 's it 's all hove in," Gran'ther said, but Mrs. Purington treated this suggestion with the silent contempt its triviality merited.

"I don't see what makes you so sot ag'in it, mother," said Huldah. "We could n't let him go on so forever, him two year ol', goin' on three, an' folks a-saying we could n't find no name good enough."

"Yes, an' if you 'd waited half an haour it would n't ha' killed nob'dy, an' I 'd ha' fetched you a name 'at 'ould saound some-

haow when he gits tu be a minister er a darkter, er goes to the leegislatur', an' 'ould look somehaow in the paper an' on his twumstun when he gits merried an' when he dies. You need n't ask me, for I won't tell ye. I 'm goin' tu save it for Sis ag'in she merries an' hes children, which I hope she won't never." Mrs. Purington searched for her pocket with her left hand, and with the other returned the handkerchief and smelling bottle to its depths with rapidly repeated thrusts, then drew back her feet and grasped the arms of her chair with deliberate intention of arising, but she was stopped by the sudden roar of Uncle Lisha.

"Good airth an' seas! what be you a-makin' sech a rumpus 'baout a young un's name for? If he 's a good boy his name 'll be good, an' if he 's a bad boy George Washin't'n would n't saound good wi' him a-bearin' on't. We hain't much more 'n worms anyways, an' it hain't but precious leetle 'caount what names we hev while we 're squirmin' 'raound here. The' hain't one name in ten thaousand but 'll be forgot a hundered years f'm naow, an' folks 'at sees 'em scratched

on gre't stuns 'll wonder why anyb'dy bothered tu du it, more 'n they will who we was or what we done. 'Baout all names is good for is to tell us f'm one 'nother, so don't fret your gizzard 'baout the boy's name, Eunice Pur'n't'n."

Mrs. Purington arose ponderously and went over to the window overlooking the garden, where Timothy Lovel was kneeling on a board carefully sowing the beds. After some moments of critical scrutiny of the work, with the rim of her deep bonnet held against the panes, she said in a tone of resignation: —

"Huldy, your rhubub 's for'arder 'n aourn, an' I guess I 'll go an' git a han'f'l tu make him some sass. He 's dretf'l fond on't."

"Yes, du, mother," cried Huldah, "an' I 'll go with you! Bub, don't he want tu go 'long tew?"

"I guess I might as well go wi' the women folks an' Bub," Aunt Jerusha said, winding the yarn carefully around the needles and sticking them into the ball of yarn before she laid her work aside. Then she followed into the garden.

"Wal, there!" Sam said in mingled amusement and vexation, "Bub he is yet, an' Bub I guess he 'll be, till he gits over it in the nat'ral way."

"By the Lord Harry, he 's named, an' the' can't nob'dy on-name him naow," Gran'ther Hill declared. "I did n't keer a primin' o' paowder what name you gin him, so you gin it, but I swear I don't b'lieve in one pusson, an' she a woman, a-bossin' all the fun'als an' namin' all the young uns in Danvis, an' I 'll cut her corners whenever I can. An' naow if you 've got some cider as good for the time o' year as it gin'ally is, I 'll m'isten my mortial clay, for barrin' your mother-in-law's weepin', this hes be'n an almighty dry chris'nin'."

CHAPTER II

TWO HAPPY COMRADES

When the little boy who was still called Bub, though he had actually acquired a name, had left off frocks and proudly put on his first pair of boots, of the old cobbler's most skillful make, Uncle Lisha thought him worthy of more particular attention, and began to instruct him in the art of being a boy.

One soft blue and golden morning the plover was wailing his heart out in the pasture, hovering on arched wings above the springing sward that shone beneath the azure vault like another sky of green with its spangles of dandelion stars. The red-headed woodpecker was hammering, squawking, and croaking in the tall elm, and now and then turning flycatcher to make an airy loop and gather in a passing insect. Down by the brook the thronging blackbirds gurgled and

chattered louder than the pebble-bottomed water that foamed and sparkled beneath them.

The old man gazed wistfully out of the open door and eagerly sniffed the breath of sweet fresh air that drifted in among the odors of leather, wax, and stale tobacco smoke. The more merrily the woodpecker's taps resounded, the more plaintively the plover wailed, and the louder the blackbirds gurgled and chattered, the more listlessly the hammer fell on the lapstone, and the more abstractedly the old shoemaker's eyes wandered from his work out across the green fields to the climbing sweeps of woodland and the beetling crests of the ancient hills.

In spite of all virtuous resolutions his heart would go a-loafing and he was fain to follow it out of the shop, though customers went barefoot. Then, when no more than a plume of a butterfly's wing was needed to tip the scale, there was a quick patter of little feet along the path, and the child appeared at the door panting with excitement as he held forth a new-found prize, — a big, fat angleworm that wriggled and squirmed

about the soil-stained fingers no bigger than itself.

"Oh, see what me got, Unc' Lisher! Great big worm. An' me want to go fishin' right off!"

"So you du, dear heart; an' so you shall if mammy 'll let us!" the old man shouted, never gladder of a pretext to quit hammer, last, and lapstone; and tumbling them unceremoniously on the floor with a clattering thud as they rebounded from the heap of leather chips. "Ju' look a' that, naow!" he said, regarding with admiration the brave grip of the little fingers on the lithe worm. "If that 'ere was a snake not no bigger, haow quick he 'd drop it! It 's nat'ral, an' the boy is a borned fisherman. He shan't be nipped in the bud if I can help it."

Uncle Lisha sloughed off his leathern apron upon the leathern-seated bench and went into the kitchen.

"Huldy!" he called, hearing the mother busy in the pantry above the splash of his scrubbing in the sink, "I wanter take the boy a-fishin'. He 's got his bait"—

"Why, Uncle Lisher, he 's tew leetle,

hain't he?" Huldy half protested, appearing at the door with whitened hands and a smutch of flour on her face.

"Not tu go along wi' me," said the old man. "Why, Sammy 's a borned fisherman if ever the' was one. He 's be'n an' got him a worm half as long as his arm, an' he 's a-teasin' tu go. I tell yer, fishin' 's good for a boy. It l'arns 'em patience, an' dependin' on the'selves, an' obsarvin', an' a-thinkin' aout things. The' hain't no fool never goin' tu make much of a fisherman. Naow, you du him up a maou'ful t' eat, an' we 'll be off tu rights. I 've got it in my bones tu go fishin' tu-day."

Huldah made no further objection, but began preparing a bountiful lunch for the two, while they went behind the woodshed with an old spade and a battered tin tobacco can. Uncle Lisha turned up great clods of moist soil and pounded them to pieces with the back of the spade, and Sammy, eager-eyed and alert, pounced on every worm that was uncovered, learning to pinch the black heads and draw forth with a humoring pull such as clung to the stiff soil. Now he nib-

bled a leaf of catnip, or held up a young leaf of motherwort to shine yellow-green between his eyes and the sun.

"There, we 've got enough, duckie," said Lisha, straightening his back before shouldering the spade, and leading the way to the house.

They presently set forth, Sammy holding on to one big waxy finger and making his short legs fly briskly to keep up with the longer strides of his companion. They made their way toward the merry babble of the brook where it glistened in the full light of the sun as it came out of the dark woods, and leaped over an obstruction of logs into a gray-green and golden water. When Uncle Lisha had cut and trimmed a shapely pole for his pupil and affixed the line and carefully baited the hook he approached the pool with the greatest caution, cast in the hook and directed Sammy to do the same. There was a wild rush, and the two hooks were struck simultaneously by an electric shock; there was a twitch and pull, two upward flying streaks of iridescent light, and two gaping trout were threshing the dry, dead leaves among the squirrel cups.

The boy's exultation over his exploit was as great a delight to Uncle Lisha, who saw his own experience repeated and in some measure felt the thrill of his first capture, so long ago, yet only yesterday, with all the hard realities of a long life but as a night of troubled dreams.

"Where 's the little fish's mammy, Unc' Lisher?" the child asked, beginning to pity his gaping victim.

"Oh, I do' know. Mebby someb'dy 's ketched her, an' mebby she 's in there a-wonderin' what 's come o' him."

"You s'pose she 's sorry, Unc' Lisher?"

"Oh, I guess not, Bub. She 'd jes' as soon eat him as not. Mebby she 's sorry she did n't."

"Don't mammy fish ta' care o' their little boys? Birds does. I seen 'em, — the robins in the apple tree does."

"No, I don't believe they do, — not as your mammy does. Le' me bait yer hook, Sammy, — there, chuck it int' the bile ag'in. He was hatched aouten an aig 'way up in the shallers, an' he had tu look aout for hisself as soon as he was borned; an' a tough

time he hed on't, I tell ye. One day a crawfish jumped aouten a hole an' made a grab for him an' ketched one o' his brothers. Another time a kingfisher come a-rattlin' along overhead an' stood stock-still in the air, right over him an' a mess o' others, an' then come daown kerslosh right amongst 'em, head fust; an' one leetle feller got in his big bill; an' some on 'em was washed ashore, high an' dry; an' some went a-scootin' ev'ry which way, so scairt they did n't know which eend was a-goin' fust.

"Then one day, when he got bigger, he was swimmin' along comf'table, lookin' up tu see 'f the' wa'n't a fly or suthin' t' eat, an' he seen a black head a-pokin' aout above a rock, an' tew leetle black eyes a-shinin' at him, an' then daown it all come, an' a long slim body arter, ju' like a black arrer, an' arter the leetle traout that went a-skivin' this way an' that, until he run 'n under a stun an' got away; an' that 'ere was a mink. So that 'ere leetly traouty he lived 'long, one way 'n' other, sometimes a-gittin' a water snail, an' sometimes a worm 'at come a-tumblin' an' squirmin' 'long the bottom; an'

sometimes a grasshopper 'at ondertook tu jump acrost the brook at tew jumps an' never done it; an' sometimes it was a fly a-buzzin' along on top o' the water, an' that was the most fun; or a white miller in the evenin' that made his thrut as dusty as the middle o' the rhud, so 's he hed tu drink more water 'n he wanted tu; or mebby it was a big maou'ful of a bumblebee 'at gin him a jab in the maouth as he went along daown, — an' that wa'n't so much fun.

"He got so he thought he knowed it abaout all, when one day along come an ol' man an' a leetle mite of a boy 'at had n't never be'n a-fishin' afore; an' he dropped a worm int' the water, an' that 'ere traout he grabbed it, an' next he knowed he was a-flyin' aouten the water like a bird, an' lit in the grass, where he never was afore; an' then he wished he hed n't; an' arter the leetle boy got over his fust bein' tickled I guess he wished he hed n't, tew."

"Was that 'Bub,' Unc' Lisher?"

"Wal, mebby so. I guess it 's all right; he was made a-puppes tu be eat some time or 'nother, an' it 's jest as well for him tu

hev his insides took aout for a crow t' eat, an' his head cut off for a mink t' eat, an' his body fried brown by Mis' Lovel for a good leetle boy t' eat, as for him tu be swallered hull by a mink or a kingfisher an' not du any good tu only one. Yep! Good airth an' seas! I guess here 's his mother!" And Uncle Lisha tore a big trout from the pool and dropped it beside the other.

"I guess not," said Sammy mournfully. "She don't act a mite glad tu see him, but jes' slaps him an' jumps on him. Oh, I got another, Unc' 'Lisher!" and he fell to rejoicing over a fresh victim.

So the two happy comrades pursued the gentle craft, stealing along the brink of the brook where it cooled its waters in the scented shade of evergreen, and wound among sprawling alders, and babbled merrily over pebbly shallows, braiding itself in a many-stranded ribbon of silver, gold and blue and green, caught from sun and sky, overhanging tree, sheen of sands and pebbles.

They met a winged fisherman announcing his progress with noisy clatter, and turning back as he came upon his plodding rivals;

and also a mink gliding along behind the rooty screen of the bank, lithe and sinuous as a serpent, now disappearing, now thrusting his vicious head from a hole, now galloping across a point, now taking a pool, swift and silent as a fish.

Concerning both Uncle Lisha promised stories to be told some evening or rainy day; and at last, having all the fish they needed, strung on slender withes of elm, Uncle Lisha proposed that they should taste the first fruits of their skill. Four trout were dressed, a fire burned to a rosy bed of coals, the fish spitted on sharpened sticks, each with a slice of pork laid inside him, and so broiled, diffusing a fragrance that might awaken hunger well laid to rest, but sharpening theirs, not yet a jot abated.

It was Sammy's first taste of outdoor cookery, and its new, unaccustomed relish was never forgotten. Years afterward, by camp-fires under Southern stars, in the hunger of prisons, the odor of the broiling trout, the breath of the May-day air, the ever-changing yet monotonous babble of the brook, came back to him through all the years of

change, over all the weary, weary miles that lay between him and childhood and home.

What a proud boy he was when he showed his catch at home, and how sweet the unstinted praise that grandfather, Aunt Jerusha, father, and mother gave the little fisherman!

CHAPTER III

A RAINY DAY IN THE SHOP

ONE day when the grass was growing perceptibly in the steady downpour of rain, Sammy grew tired of watching the ceaseless leaping of a countless host of little men as he imagined the upspringing drops in the puddles to be, none of whom ever stayed long enough for him to get the least acquainted with, nor to individualize, as he could the robin and the sparrow that came down to the same puddle to drink and bathe. He would have known them the next day, for all their looking so blurred and distorted as they were by the streaked wash of the window panes, and they put him in mind of something that made him run into the shop to his friend and boon companion.

The old man was closing up the seam of a boot leg with long, strong pulls of two waxed ends, the crooked awl going out on one side

and jabbing the air, then coming back and stabbing the leather, the threads following with a squeaking swish and a tight-drawn tug.

"Hello, my man! An' what 's he a-doin' on this wet mornin'?" he accosted his welcome visitor.

"Oh, not much; only watchin' the little men a-jumpin' up tu ketch the rain, an' the birds a-washin' off the' feathers; an' now I come for you to tell me a story. You said you would some rainy day, abaout them fishin' birds an' the mink, — an' I guess this is that kind of a day."

"Wal, yes; I most guess I did. Le' me see!" He scratched his head thoughtfully with the awl. "Was 't the kingfisher? Yes. Wal, the' was tew on 'em borned right on this brook, in a hole in the bank, on a mess o' fish bones for a nest, I 've hearn tell by them 'at 's seen 'em. An' here they lived an' growed up one summer, quicker 'n what leetle boys does, 'at takes twenty year, an' they l'arned tu fish as handy, 'thaout usin' any hook an' line or worms, but jest the' bills an' the' wings, a-hangin' in the

air over a fish 'at did n't think no more harm on 'em 'an of a thistledown a-floatin' by, till, kerslosh! daown come bill an' feathers atop on him, an' in he went along wi' a dozen others, an' a-sailin' off over the water afore he 'd done a-kickin'.

"When it come along in the fall o' the year an' got cold 'nough so 't the' was spikes of ice made along the banks, these tew kingfishers started off on a long journey, follow'in' the streams saouth, a-stoppin' tu ketch 'em a fish when they got hungry, a-seein' shell-duck a-scootin' arter 'em under water, an' loons a-divin', an' fish-hawks a-swoopin' aouten the sky, an' men a-ketchin' on 'em in all ways, so it seemed as if the' could n't be a fish left nowheres for another year, an' so at last they come to a country where the rivers never froze an' the fields was allers green. There was black men and women a-workin' in 'em an' a-fishin' in the streams, an' one day as they went clatterin' along a river, one on 'em lit on a stake nigh where tew black men was a-fishin' an' one on 'em says, 'There 's one o' aour kingfishers, an'

when he goes north in the spring, I 'm a-goin' tu foller him, come what will.'

" An' sure 'nough so he did. When the birds looked back they seen him, fur or nigh, — sometimes in a boat, sometimes a-wadin' when the' was bloodhounds arter him, goin' up streams when they run saouth, an' daown 'em when they run north, till he come clean here, an' then the black man bid 'em good-by, an' thanked 'em, an' another man 'at I know put him intu a boat an' he went off tu Canady, where Ann Twine come from."

" That 's a real nice story, Unc' Lisher; an' naow won't you tell me another?" said Sammy, settling more comfortably on a squeaky roll of sole leather.

" Wal, the' was a leetle boy, 't was as hungry for stories as a kingfisher is for minnies, an' you could n't fill him up no easier," said the old man.

" Not that, but another, Unc' Lisher!" the child pleaded.

" Wal, I 'll tell ye a story

'Baout ol' Mother Morey,
An' naow my story 's begun.'"

"Oh, not that ol' story," Sammy interrupted, kicking out impatiently, "but one about a mink. Oh, please, Unc' Lisher, it rains like everything!"

"Wal, so I will, dear heart; an' it is tew bad tu plague a poor leetle boy 'at hain't a duck an' can't go aout an' play in the mud puddles," said the relenting raconteur, cleaning his pipe with the awl, filling and lighting it while he planned a beginning and trusted to luck for a happy ending.

"Once the' was a' ol' man mink an' his wife lived in a hole in the bank o' Stunny Brook, — thet 's aour brook, — 'n under the rhuts of a big maple tree, an' they wa'n't the pleasantest o' neighbors for the fish an' birds an' frogs 'at lived nigh 'em, I 'll tell ye, 'cause they was a hungry lot, an' more 'n all that, killed when they wa'n't hungry. Why, they 'd ketch an' kill frogs till they got a pile they could n't see one 'nother over, an' they was allers a-robbin' birds' nests o' aigs an' young; an' fish — my land! the' wa'n't no sati'fyin' on 'em. An' they 'd kill mushrat tew, bigger 'n they was. An' when they had a fam'ly o' young uns tu

feed, it was ridic'lous the way them mink slaughtered right an' left.

"One day in June a man 'at I know come along there an' he seen where them mink had killed ten young pa'tridges, an' he was mad, an' says he, 'I 'll pay you for that in the fall when your fur gits good, for them was my pa'tridges.' An' so when cold weather come he took some traps an' sot 'em some in holler lawgs an' some in holes, an' one in under the big maple, an' he baited 'em all wi' mushrat, which no mink can't never go by, an' when he went 'raound tu 'em he had three o' them black thieves, an' he jest knocked 'em in the head and stretched the' skins on some boards, an' took 'em daown tu Clapham's an' sol' 'em. An' I expec' he 'll buy a jackknife wi' some o' the money, for his name is Sam Lovel, an' his leetle boy wants one tu dress his fish with.

"Naow, I see a shadblow tree over there in the woods 't looks ju' like a haycock ketched in a snowstorm, an' 'long in June, when the bar'ies gits ripe, me an' Sammy 'll go an' git some on' 'em, an' mebby shoot a wild pigeon, if daddy 'll go 'long wi' his

gun. An' that 's stories 'nough for one rainy day, hain't it?"

Sammy unwillingly assented, and went back to the kitchen to comfort himself with a slice of bread spread thickly with maple sugar.

CHAPTER IV

A VISIT TO GRAN'THER HILL

One morning an air of mystery pervaded the Lovel homestead. The mistress was not visible, but some neighborly women appeared to have usurped her place. Mrs. Purington was there, with Maria Hill and Mrs. Briggs obeying her orders as she gave them out from her rocking-chair, all officious and domineering, as it seemed to Sammy, while the men of the household were correspondingly meek and subdued.

Dr. Root, the Thompsonian practitioner, was present, superintending the steeping of herbs on the stove, and his horse was put in the stable as if the period of his stay was indefinite. Breakfast was served and eaten with dispatch, as if it were quite a secondary affair, and then Uncle Lisha invited Sammy to go with him to Joseph Hill's, and the pair trudged away well content to be in each

other's company, away from home with its unpleasant preponderance of femininity.

"What 's gran'ma an' all them women tu aour house for, Unc' Lisher?" Sammy asked after much silent pondering of the problem.

"Oh, I guess they come tu visit along wi' the darkter."

"An' wha' 'd he come for?"

"I da' say tu visit along wi' them," Uncle Lisha answered, hoping there might be an end of questions. "We 'll go on an' see Gran'ther Hill; he 's older 'n any hill raound here, — older 'n Tater Hill, fur 's I know, — an' he knows more stories 'n the 'Rabian Nights' tells on. Mebby he 'll tell us some on 'em, 'baout Ticonderoge an' Bennin't'n, like 'nough, an' Injuns, an' wolves, an' I do' know what all."

"What was Ti—Ticon-dero— I do' know haow you say it."

"'Derogy? Oh, that 's a fort him an' another man took away from the British in ol' times."

They found the veteran sitting outside the kitchen door, shooing away the chickens with frequent flourishes of his staff, sometimes

getting the end under some gawky, long-legged, too adventurous cockerels and tossing the unsuspecting fowl in the air.

"Jozeff's womern is bediviled arter chickens!" he remarked to the visitors after a successful toss. "An' I'd rather hev the devil raound me — the idgets!"

"Pooty middlin' good they be stewed or friggseed," said Uncle Lisha.

"I'd livser hev a pa'tridge," said Gran'ther Hill.

"Yes, but them ye can't git ary minute you take a notion," Lisha remarked.

"Mebby you can't; but me an' that 'ere boy can, an' we 'll show ye some day, won't us, Bub?"

Sammy modestly assented.

"But ye can't go aout an' find a pa'tridge nest any time."

"Wal, oncte I faound a pa'tridge nest just at the right minute."

"An' haow was that, Cap'n Hill?"

"I was a-scaoutin' clust tu the inemy, wi' not a maou'ful t' eat in my knapsack, an' afeard tu shoot on account o' showin' where I was. I tell ye, it was all-killin' tough tu

see a pa'tridge struttin' along ahead on ye, or a rabbit a-skippin' away, or a deer git up an' stretch hisself when yer stomach was a-cryin' cupboard so you was ready tu eat yer moccasin strings, an' you da'sn't shoot. Oncte a deer got up that way, an' I see an Injin rise up from behind a lawg not ten rod off, an' p'int his gun at him, an' a-lookin' mighty hungry an' wishful. But he da'sn't shoot no more 'n me, an' by'm by went a-sneakin' off a-huntin' sech game as me, an' one a-hankerin' for his scalp.

"When all tu oncte a pa'tridge scooted aout from most under my foot, an' there lay a dozen white aigs. I jest dropped daown aside on 'em an' gobbled 'em. I do' know but the' was young birds in 'em as big as bumblebees. I did n't stop tu ask no questions, an' I never eat a better meal. The next thing I hed t' eat was a han'ful o' no-cake aouten a dead Injin's bag."

"'T ain't good tu hev no-cake, is 't, Unc' Lisher?" Sammy asked with round wistful eyes on the grim, gaunt old story-teller.

"It 's paounded popcorn he means, an' leetle boys likes that."

While Uncle Lisha was speaking, the old man hobbled to a cupboard across the room, reached his hand into an earthen jar, and brought back two heart-shaped seed cookies.

"There, Sammy, see if them ain't better 'n no-cake."

"I b'lieve I 've hearn tell haow you was tu Ticonderoge, Cap'n Hill?" Uncle Lisha delicately suggested.

"Me! Wal, I rather guess I was; the secont man inside arter ol' Ethan an' that Beeman boy. By the Lord Harry! it allers tickled me for tu hear tell what Ethan said when he met the cap'n. He writ a book a-tellin' on't, haow he demanded the fort, 'In the name o' the Gre't Jehover an' the Continental Congress!' 'an' haow he talked tu us arter we landed. Says he, 'Boys, it 'll be daylight afore them lazy bones gits here, an' aour cake 'll all be dough. You that 's for goin' ahead, p'ise your firelocks, an' don't ye du it if you 're a lot o' damned caowards;' an' when he come tu the cap'n's quarters he says, says he, 'Come aout o' yer hole, you damned ol' skunk, or by the Gre't Jehover I 'll let daylight through ye!'

Them 's the words he said! He did n't stop for tu make no Fourth o' July speech."

"Did he ever know any wolves, real ones, Unc' Lisher?" the young listener whispered covertly, yet overheard.

"Law, yes, no eend on 'em. Why, he act'ally shot the last wolf 'at ever come tu Danvis!"

"Was it wolves he was a-askin'?" Gran'-ther Hill demanded. "Lord Harry, I guess you 'd 'a' thought so when I fust come tu Danvis! It was o-o-o-o here, an' o-o-o-o there as soon as ever night come, till they 'd killed off all the deer, an' you might as well try for tu keep chickens in a weasel hole as tu keep a sheep anywher's! But they got trapped an' hunted off arter a spell, till the' wa'n't none left here 'ceptin' one ol' she, 'at kep' up on Tater Hill. She raised a litter reg'lar, an' every night daown she 'd come off'n the maountain an' crost the river an' git her belly full o' mutton, an' take it back tu her whelps, an' the' could n't nob'dy git a sight on her nor ketch her, she was that cunnin'. So one day I took me a trap on my shoulder, an' I took tu the river a-wadin'

along, till by'm by I faound a path where the ol' rip come daown for tu cross, an' there I sot my trap wi' a sod on the pan abaout a step from the shore, an' next mornin' it was gone, bob an' sinker, an' I follered up the trail an' faoun' the ol' varmint lookin' 'shamed enough. When I 'd killed her an' skun her, I follered up the path an' faoun' the den, an' the next thing was for tu git the cubs.

"When I reckoned they 'd got hungry 'nough tu be kerless I baited a hook wi' mutton, an' when they 'd grab it I 'd yank 'em aout, till I got three. I allers cal'lated there was one more, an' I 'spect the ol' he, he raised him, an' he come back arter a spell, an' was the one I killed tew year ago. I 'll take ye up there an' show ye the place some day, Bub, when you git big enough tu go huntin'. You 'll take tu it, I know by the way ye tousled that foxskin 'fore ye could walk. He 'd make a boy if I hed the raisin' on him, an' it wa' n't for his hevin' sech a gran'marm."

"It 's ruther late for him to help that, Cap'n Hill," said Uncle Lisha.

"I spusso," the veteran reluctantly assented. "But the ol' critter might die off. I wonder if I can't find him some o' Mari's sweet-flag candy. That 'ere 's fust chop for leetle boys, if aour Bub an' amongst 'em hain't eat it all up."

"Wolves!" Gran'ther Hill mused as he bestowed a handful of sliced calamus root candied in maple sugar upon his youthful guest. "Lord Harry, Lisher! Don't you remember what a hullaballoo the' was over what 's-his-name a-bein' eat up by wolves in his sugar camp? There was his bones, — sheep's bones they was, — an' I wonder the critter hed sense enough tu take huffs off, an' the snow all trampled up by the wolves, — every identical track made wi' a right forepaw! An' his women hed a fun'ral over them bones, an' buried 'em, an' put up a gravestun, 'He is not dead, but sleepeth!' Sure 'nough, so he was, way aout in York State! It wa'n't much that way with Jim Walker an' Ike Warner, which I s'pose you 've heered on time an' ag'in; but Bub here never did.

"They was a-comin' from a loggin' bee

arter dark, an' there was a mess o' wolves took arter 'em. Jim an' Ike hed both be'n arter the same gal, nip an' tuck, for a year, but Ike got the whip hand an' got the gal. Jim did n't lay it up ag'in Ike none, but was jes' as good friends as ever, an' thought just as much of Phebe. Wal, the wolves kep' a-gittin' sassier, an' they hed n't ary gun, an' the darker it got the cluster the wolves come, an' it begun tu look mighty ser'ous, an' they kep' a-hus'lin' an' a-lookin' for a tree they could climb, but it 'peared as if the very woods was agin 'em, an' every tree a-swellin' up bigger 'n a man could hug, an' a-holdin' up its branches ten feet higher 'n ever. They got tu runnin' at last, an' Ike he was the shortest-winded an' shortest-laiged, but Jim never left him behind, an' kep' a-encouragin' on him, a-tellin' on him 'baout Phebe an' the baby. By'm by Jim faced about an' ketched Ike by the hand. 'Good-by,' says he, 'an' now run for your life whilst I hold 'm a spell.' Ike run on, a-lookin' back over his shoulder naow an' agin, an' there stood Jim steddy as a rock, wi' his club up an' ready.

"At fust the wolves stood off kinder shy; then they come a-jumpin' an' a-snappin', an' daown come the club like a flail, a-layin' aout a wolf 'baout every time. But the last time he looked the' wa'n't no Jim, — only a black swarm a-surgin' back an' tew on the graound in the dusk, an' that was the last he seen. Ike never wanted tu talk much 'baout that, but he done more 'n any other ten men tu clean the wolves aouten this country. He trapped 'em, an' he p'isened 'em, an' if the' was a wolf hunt within twenty mild he was in it.

"One day he went a-huntin' an' never come back, an' we rallied aout tu s'arch for him. I was the fust one come on tu him, a-layin' on his back wi' a big painter atop on him. The wind was a-blowin' strong, an' the critter's tail was a-wavin' in 't as nat'ral as life, — jest that ugly twitch cat critters hes when they 're settin' their teeth into their game, an' I up wi' my gun an' gin it tu him jest behind the shoulder; but the' wa'n't a stir. The critter was dead as hay, wi' Ike's bullet through his heart.

"Ah, wal, these 'ere woods hain't what

they useter be," the veteran sighed, casting a regretful glance upon the broad sweep of forest that stooped from the lofty mountain crests to the narrow level of cleared land. "The' hain't nothin' in 'em naow bigger 'n a fox, nor dang'rouser 'n a coon, — 'ceptin' naow an' agin a bear."

To the little boy they looked as illimitable as the sky and as full of mystery, and why not full of such tragedies as this he had just heard? Some day, when he grew to be a man, — not so old as Gran'ther Hill, nor so fat as Uncle Lisha, for these he could not be, but something like that paragon of men, his father, — that wonderful realm of shade and strange sounds would be open to him as it was now to them; and then what sights he would see, and be a teller of tales to little boys! So with far-away gaze where the cloud shadows swept across the green roof of the woods, he dreamed the unspeakable dreams of childhood, — the dreams that are realities, never needing to come truer, — while the two old men droned on of common affairs not worth being true.

By and by Ruby had a dinner ready for

them, concerning which she was nervously anxious, it being her first attempt to accomplish such a feat alone. But it was all that could be desired by a company blessed with such appetites. The potatoes were puffs of meal; the dandelion greens were tender; the pork boiled to just the right degree; and the Indian pudding was as good as her mother's. She could not ask for greater praise than her grandfather gave her when he said, —

"I 'm almighty glad they named you Ruby arter your gran'mother!"

In the afternoon the youngsters played "Injun" and hunted wolves; and when the cows were coming home, lowing for their imprisoned calves, Uncle Lisha again bent his waxy forefinger to the clasp of Sammy's chubby palm, and the pair wended their way homeward.

The house was very quiet when they entered the kitchen. The doctor was gone, but the odor of his decoctions still lingered; and Aunt Jerusha and Maria Hill were busy at the stove with several messes, — some nutritious, others medicinal. Mrs.

Purington sat apart in a rocking-chair, critically observant, and with an air of general disapproval, her smelling bottle and handkerchief in either hand.

"Wal, young man," she sighed, regarding her grandson mournfully, and quite ignoring Uncle Lisha, "your nose is aout o' j'int!"

Sammy put one hand to that rotund feature, and was not a little surprised to find that he had suffered no perceptible change. "Where 's mammy?" he asked.

"Why, bless his dear heart!" cried Aunt Jerusha. "Mammy 's in the bedroom, an' she 's got a leetle sister for him, 'at the darkter fetched in his saddlebags, an' he shall go right in an' see it!"

Wherewith she took him by the hand and led him to Huldah's bedside, where she was lying very still and pale, with a world of love beaming from her soft eyes for her little boy when he was lifted up to kiss her and be shown the wee bit of humanity that was cuddled beside her.

"She hain't so pooty as the new pigs," he commented. "Will she see some time, an' talk an' walk?"

"Yes, deary, an' be a dear little sister for him to play with an' ta' care of."

Then, with many injunctions to lie very still, he was left to lie beside his mother and whisper his story of the day's adventures. Returning to the kitchen, he had some disparaging remarks to make concerning his new relative, and of the doctor as a purveyor of such additions to the family.

"If I was the darkter I'd keep 'em till they got bigger afore I fetched 'em," he said, thinking it would be a long time for him to wait for this nestling to become an available playmate. Ruby Hill's dolls were better, for they would bear rough handling, while he was scarcely permitted to touch this fragile mite.

"Wal, I du hope tu land o' goodness," Mrs. Purington groaned, "whatever comes, when it comes tu namin' this baby, she won't be named so utter ridic'lous as what he is! I du think it 's time my folks was considered a leetle in a-namin' my grandchildren. Eunice would be a nice name for her, an' would come real handy for her tu hev all my sheets and tablecloths marked 'E. B.' in the right-hand corner, some in cross-stitch, an' some

with endurable ink, an' all she 'd hafter du 'd be tu put on a 'L.' Don't let me forgit tu mention that tu Huldy in the mornin'. But, oh, dear me, suzzy day! I p'sume tu say that ol' Gran'ther Hill — my sakes, M'rier, what hev I said? But I won't spile a story for relation's sake — 'll come over here an' coax 'em tu name her Rew-by or Mer-ri-er. Or mebby that Antwine Frenchman 'll git 'em tu name her after his womern. Some way they 'll work it tu take a name aouten honest people's maouths. But she won't git my linen sheets an' tablecloths 't I wove when I was a gal, an' no gal naowerdays knows 'nough tu spin, let alone warpin' a web. I do' know what this world is a-comin' tu! It does seem as 'ough the next gineration would n't know nothin'!" She sought consolation for the degeneracy of the times in her smelling bottle, and shut her eyes upon a naughty world.

"Oh, law sakes! I guess there 'll be a name pervided some way; the' allers has be'n. An' what a lot on 'em!" said Aunt Jerusha cheerfully as she bore a basin of gruel in to Huldah.

CHAPTER V

A BALL

"Unc' Lisher, Aunt 'Rushy says she guess you 'll cover my ball," the little boy said, coming to the shoe bench and laying a newly wound ball of yarn on the old man's knee. It was tightly wound of raveled stocking yarn about a core of India rubber made of strings cut from one of the shapeless rubber overshoes of those days, and was wonderfully elastic, as Uncle Lisha proved by casting it smartly on the floor, whence it bounded almost to the smoky ceiling, and at the second rebound splashed into the water tub, where it bobbed up and down for an instant before it was snatched forth by Uncle Lisha's rescuing hand.

"Good airth an' seas! That was tew bad tu go an' chuck that 'ere new ball inter the nasty ol' tub!" he shouted, wiping the dripping toy on his apron. "My! it 's alive,

hain't it? An' it jest went an' hopped in there for fun. But it hain't hurt it one mite, an' he need n't go tu puckerin' up his face abaout that! We 'll let that 'ere baby in there du the cryin'; she hain' nothin' else tu tend tu. Naow, I hain't go' no piece o' luther in the shop fit fur tu kiver sech a neat ball, but I know where the' is some 'at 'll du it complete wi' jest a leetle mite o' fixin'. It 's on a' ol' woo'chuck naow, but it 's jest a-itchin' for tu git on this ball an' ha' some fun. An' I da' say the woo'chuck feels jest that way about it, for he 's be'n a-eatin' your daddy's clover an' a-tromplin' of it daown this tew year, an' oncte he stole some beans, an' he 'd orter feel ju' like makin' some returns for all he 's hed. I hain't got nothin' drivin' on hand, so I 'll git one o' your daddy's traps an' we 'll gwup an' talk it over wi' Mr. Woo'chuck."

He went in quest of a trap, with which he presently returned, and the two set forth, the child clinging to the old man's finger to keep himself on foot in the tangle of may-weed that bordered the wagon track. They soon entered the meadow, and afar off over

the clover and the budding daisies saw the woodchuck sitting at his open door, — a brown lump in the yellow threshold of fresh loam.

"There he is!" said Uncle Lisha, stopping to cut and trim a crotched stick from a hazel thicket. "He 's a-waitin' for us, but he 'll run intu his haouse long 'nough 'fore we git there. An' then, like 'nough, he 'll come aout tu stay, an' go hum wi' us mebby. 'Long last fall, when the clover begin tu git frosted, an' the ol' bumblebees 'at got drunk on the honey, an' laid aout overnight, waked up mighty stiff in the mornin', an' ol' Mr. Woo'chuck smelt the col' weather comin' nigh, he jest went int' the furder eend o' his suller an' curled up an' shet his eyes an' went tu sleep an' dreamed o' clover an' bean patches till they come true in the spring. I do' know whether or no it was a robin a-singin' 'at woke him, or the blackbirds down by the brook, or a skunk come in an' bid him good-mornin', but some way or 'nother he got woke up, an' come aou' door, an' the snow was all gone, an' the' was a twinge o' green on the warm side-hills. I

most wish 't we could du ju' so, only we 'd miss the skatin' an' slidin' daownhill. Yip! there he goes a-whistlin' int' his hole!"

A whisk of the brown tail was the last they saw of him for a while, and a smothered whistle the last they heard. Uncle Lisha drove the stake through the chain-ring, set the trap, covered it carefully, and removed to a cosy bend of the bank, where he lighted his pipe; and Sammy, after the manner of his kind, began teasing for a story. But while Uncle Lisha was rummaging his wits and the landscape for a subject, the brown nose of the woodchuck reappeared, making a cautious reconnoissance; there was a sharp metallic click, a clink of the chain, and a loud, querulous whistle that was smothered instantaneously in the depths of the burrow.

"Hooray! We got him!" Uncle Lisha shouted, getting quickly to his feet and hurrying to the place, Sammy running beside him in breathless excitement.

The chain was drawn taut, and the stake was quivering with the strain upon it. Uncle Lisha loosened and pulled it up, and

began drawing forth the captive. Now the trap appeared with a brown leg in its vise-like grip, then a grim, grizzled head, growling and gnashing the long white teeth.

"Oh, I do' want no cover on my ball!" Sammy cried, shrinking back. "Let him go, Unc' Lisher; let him go!"

"Bless your heart, child, he can't hurt nob'dy! See!" the old man said, reassuringly, and gave the poor brute a stunning blow, which, twice or thrice repeated, put an end to his struggles. "My, hain't he a nice fat one, an' won't his hide make a complete kiver for aour ball, oncte we git it tanned good!" and now that the cruelty of capture and killing were over the boy's nature began to assert itself, and he, too, exulted over the exploit, yet not without twinges of remorse.

"Hain't he big? An' haow quick we ketched him! But he won't never come aout an' see haow pooty all aou' doors is! Poor ol' woo'chock. Say, Unc' Lisher, when we git most hum may I kerry him?"

"Oh, I guess we do' wanter lug his ol' carkis hum, du we? He 's tough an' strong,

but Bub can kerry the skin hum just as his daddy does his foxskins," and Sammy being reconciled to this arrangement, Uncle Lisha stripped off the skin, and the two went home, the boy running in advance to display the trophy and tell the story of its capture.

Uncle Lisha consigned the skin to the soap barrel without knowledge of the too fastidious womenkind, whence it was taken after a couple of days, ready to yield the bedraggled hair to persuasive scraping, and then was pulled, rubbed, and kneaded until it became as pliable as a glove, and as yellow as a lemon.

"An' naow, I b'lieve if that ol' woo'chuck could see it he would n't know it, an' if he did, he 'd be praoud on't," said Uncle Lisha. "Oncte when Clapham was a boy, a-goin' tu school, he was allers a-dickerin'," said he, musing on the past. "In the summer he 'd ketch woo'chuck an' tan the hides an' make 'em intu shoestrings for a pint o' corn a pair, an' the lashes for a quart, an' then he 'd sell the corn for knickknacks, —

pins an' needles, an' buttons an' combs, — an' then he 'd peddle 'em aout for cash, an' so arter a spell got tu keepin' store. That is the way he got a start in the world."

According to some occult rule, the old shoemaker cut the skin into oval quarters and sewed them over the ball with waxed ends, and soon had it ready to meet the fate of all balls, which is to get hopelessly lost.

"There," he said, handing it over to its proud owner, "you can play tew ol' cat, or barnbase, or most anything wi' that 'ere ball naow," and Sammy went forth rejoicing.

CHAPTER VI

CANADIAN TALES

One dewy morning Antoine made his appearance with a hoe upon his shoulder to work in the garden, according to a previous contract, and Sammy soon came to while away the morning hours with a friendly visit, sweetening the self-imposed duty with a lump of maple sugar moulded in an egg-shell. Its hard rotundity resisted his attempts to get a full bite, and he had only succeeded in grooving it with the marks of his milk teeth.

Antoine, noting it, asked, "Wal, you gat some hen lay dat kan o' aig, prob'ly?"

"No; Aunt 'Rushy done it," the child answered.

"She pooty good hen, a'n't it?" said Antoine quickly.

"Aour hens lays aigs wi' chickens in 'em. Does yourn?"

"Sometam he do, sometam he don't," the Canadian answered. "One ma hol' hen dis sprim come aout hees nes' wid ten leetly dawk. W'en dey come on de brook dey all of it jomp on de water, an' dat hol' hen he was crazy for 'fraid dey all be draown."

Sammy was not entirely credulous, and made a mental note that he would tell Uncle Lisha that Antoine had hens that laid duck eggs, and ask his opinion of the story.

"You lak de mepple sug' aig pooty good, a'n't it?" Antoine continued, after a little waiting for further questions. "Wal, sah, if you lak it, you want for go 'long to me in Canada, sometam. Oh, dar was hol' great big montaigne dar, all mepple sugre. Yaas, sah; dat was de place for leetly boys, Ah tol' you."

Sammy was inclined to think so too, and began to look with contempt upon his gnawed morsel. "As big as Hog's Back?" he asked.

"Gosh, yes; big as 'Tater Hill! Haow you s'pose he come so? Wal, sah, Ah 'll goin' tol' you 'baout dat. You see dar was great many, plenty mepple tree, prob'ly

t'ousan', grow on one big montaigne — one dat dey call vulcanno, got fire inside of him, burn all de tam, all de tam, an' smoke lak forty coal pit. Den one tam in de sprim dey comes some awfuls t'under an' li'tlin's an' he stroke all dem tree an' split it lak kindly hwoods, so de sap all run off in brook as big as Stony Brook an' ran inside de montaigne, an' he bile, an' bile, so he bile over, an' it was mepple sirrup run aout an' run daown all de side dat montaigne, an' when he got cool off it was mepple sugre, four, fave, prob'ly t'ree foot t'ick, more as nacre of it; an' all you gat for do was chawp it up wid axe an' carry him off. Ah 'll goin' tak you dar sometam if you want it!"

Sammy declared that nothing would please him more, and Antoine went on. "But you gat for look aout for bear. Dey come from all over, for gat dat sugre. Ma gran'-fader he keel more as fifty dar." This consideration made Sammy hesitate to accept the invitation, and in his agitation he pulled up a freshly sprouted bean.

"Dar! see what you do, bad leetly boy!" cried Antoine. "Bah gracien! 'f you do

so bad lak dat bete an grand cue gat you!"

"What sort o' thing 's that, Mr. Antoine?" Sammy asked, with a determination not to be frightened without knowing why.

"Oh, dat was kan o' t'ing dey gat in Canada dat ketch leetly boy if he a'n't be good!"

"How does he look?" Sammy asked, with increased curiosity.

"Oh, he 'll gat tails longer as everyt'ing, an' he win' it raoun' leetly boy's neck of it an' choke it so he can' breeze!" Antoine's vague description of this Canadian invention for the better management of children was not satisfying.

"I guess I be good an' go to the sugar mountain."

"Yas, dat was de bes', an' de milk river, too, dat was pooty good for leetly boy."

"What 's that?"

"Oh, you see, one tam gre't many year 'go, dar was hol' whomans, hol', hol', an' lame so she can' mos' go, was travel long one naght, an' come on rich farmer haouse an' ask it if he can stay all naght, an' dey

hugly, an' say 'No,' an' drove it off. Nex' he stop on poor man haouse, a'n't mos' gat 'nough for heat heself, an' dat man tol' it he can stay, an' give it bes' he gat. Nex' morny dat rich man caow, twonty of it, all, all dry aout, an' a'n't give some more milk, never; an' dat poor man cow w'en de whomans go meet him, hees milk run so you never see, four stream, all so big lak Stony Brook, all ron in one, an' mak' river so big canoe could go on it, an' he run so forever. An' dat mans got big rich, an' rich farmer mans gat poor so he on de taowns. Dat hol' whomans he was weetch, an' dat de way he pay it. Naow if you go dar an' want for heat some breads an' milk, all you gat for do was jomp on boats wid your spoon an' loafs of bread an' jes' drop him on de river an' pick him up wid you' spoon as you go 'long. Dat was pooty comfortably, Ah 'll tol' you. An' 'f you 'll drudder had bread an' butters, all you gat for do was go to de falls, feefty foot high, dey was, an' roar lak some bulls, only kan sof'ly, an' dere you faound more butters as you can see in two week, 'ca'se de falls he churn hese'f all de

tam, an' all de river beelow was buttermilks, an' all berlong of dat mans, an' he was happy, 'cause he a'n't never had for churn — dat was mean works for mans, Ah 'll tol' you!"

"Is that a true story, Mr. Antoine?" Sammy asked, his eyes growing rounder with wonder.

"Yas, sah! Jes' as true as dat mepple sugre montaigne," Antoine declared, with unquestionable seriousness.

These tales made Sammy so hungry that he was obliged to run in at once for something wherewith to appease the yearnings of his stomach. When Aunt Jerusha had provided him with a great slice of bread and butter, he went into the shop to confer with his bosom friend, who, after a comprehensive glance over the rim of his spectacles, said: —

"Bub, he 'd better seddaown t' eat that 'ere hunk o' bread and butter, 'cause if he should drop it ont' his toes, 't would smash 'em."

Sammy took the advice at first as seriously as the expression of Uncle Lisha's face

seemed to demand and complied with it. But when he had wiggled his toes in his shoes, and considered their power of endurance, his philosophical conclusion led to rather contemptuous dissent.

"Pooh! Guess it would n't hurt 'em. They 're harder 'n bread an' butter!"

"But ju' look o' the size!" Uncle Lisha urged. "You could n't find you' toes nunder it."

Sammy wiggled his toes contemplatively, and regarded the rapidly diminishing slice and dismissed the subject.

"Say, Unc' Lisher, you s'pose Mr. Antoine talks true?"

"What 's he be'n tellin' on ye?"

"Oh, he say the' 's rocks o' sugar an' a river o' milk in Canerdy, an' he 's got a he hen 'at lays aigs leetly ducks comes aout on!"

"Shaw! Ann Twine 's French, an' his tongue gits twisted tryin' tu talk English. I s'pect it kinder gits away from him oncte in a while an' he do' know what 't is sayin'."

"Would yourn act so if you talked French, Unc' Lisher?"

"I da' say 't would," the old man answered, with a twinkle in his eyes.

"Unc' Lisher!"

"Wal, sonny, what is 't?" the old man responded, speaking out of one corner of his mouth while the middle of it held a dozen shoe pegs ready for his fingers.

"How does a wild pigeon look?"

"Oh, they 're proper harnsome, wi' gre't long tails."

"They hain't them things Antoine says ketches little boys when they hain't good, be they?" Sammy asked in some alarm.

"No, indeedy, they hain't. Ann Twine, he tells whoppers, he does. What makes Bub ask 'baout pigeons?"

"'Cause you tol' me the' 'd be some on that posy tree over tu the woods, an' it 's full o' some big birds naow. They 've got long tails, an' when they fly they clap their wings ju' like the ol' rooster 'fore he crows. You said we 'd go an' shoot 'em. Will ye?"

"Good airth an' seas! Uncle Lisher could n't noways this mornin'. He 's got tu get these shoes tapped for an ol' womern

'at needs 'em bad. If 't wa'n't nothin' but a man, I 'd let 'em go."

"What be I goin' t' du? Daddy 's gone away, an' his gun 's tew big!"

"Wal, I guess the leetle boy'll hafter wait," said Uncle Lisha, whacking away alternately at awl and pegs.

CHAPTER VII

WOOD FOLKS

Sammy wandered about disconsolately until a sight of the Hill homestead gave him an aspiration. Gran'ther Hill had said that they would go hunting some day, and why was not this the appointed time? It was true, he had not grown much since then, but one could not wait forever, and pigeons would wait for no one. So, deeming it wiser to go first and ask permission afterward, he trudged away.

As he arrived, panting, in the presence of the veteran, whom he fortunately found in the mood of wanting something to break the monotony of idleness, with no circumlocution, he broke forth: —

"Say, Gran'ther Hill, don't you wanter go huntin', 'cause the' 's a whole lot o' pigeons tu a shad tree up in the woods, an' you can shoot 'em?"

The old man glowered down upon him so grimly, his toothless jaw agape with wonder, that Sammy almost repented his choice of a comrade.

"You come up here a-puppus tu git me tu go a-huntin' with ye? Wal, wal, you be the beater for a young un. Why, I guess I'll hafter, if I can find anything tu feed the ol' gun with. Le' me go an' see!"

He soon reappeared with the ancient weapon, and began loading, while Sammy curiously watched the mysterious process, the measure of black grains poured down the long barrel, the wadding of tow that followed, then the handful of pellets rattling after, blue as frost grapes with long keeping, then another wad of tow, and the final priming, and then the wonder of it all, that this dead inert filling of an iron tube was to bring about the killing of pigeons. But it must be that one so old as Gran'ther Hill knew that it was all right, and so in the fullness of faith Sammy grasped the patriarch's staff, two feet below the wrinkled hand, and set forth to guide him to the shad tree.

They held across the pasture and drew

near the edge of the woods, until they saw the slender *Amelanchier*, its branches bent with the weight of the crowding pigeons, jostling each other and clapping their wings to maintain foothold. The old man left his little comrade crouching beside a stump, while he went forward, bending low in range of a great beech. Gaining this he straightened himself and peered cautiously out from behind it. Then Sammy saw the long barrel raised and leveled, heard the click of the flint, saw the flash and smoke, the puff of priming, the belch of fire and smoke from the muzzle, an upward flash of resplendent wings, a downright fall of several feathered forms, amid the echoing roar of the gun and the simultaneous roar of a hundred pairs of wings clapping all at once in startled flight, with cripples dribbing out of the flock as it whirled away into the depths of the woods.

Sammy ran forward to the scene of slaughter, to which Gran'ther Hill hobbled with all speed and began picking up the birds, giving the cripples a merciful quietus with a punch of the thumb in the skull.

"Thirteen on 'em, the' be!" he declared, upon completing the count. "Wal, Bub, that hain't so bad for two ol' fellers 'at run away tu go a-huntin'! An' what a lot o' sarvice baries! The' 'll be pigeons here 'most any day for a spell; hens in the mornin', cocks in the arternoon."

Then he plucked out four of the long tail feathers, and tying two of the plume ends together he strung the birds through the soft middle of the nether bill in two bunches. The larger he slung upon the barrel of the gun, the smaller he consigned to Sammy's care, who slung it on a stick over his shoulder, and so the two trudged homeward, the one as proud as the other, while the elder told of the marvelous flights of pigeons in olden times, when the sky was darkened by the endless hordes.

"Why, where on this livin' airth did ye git them pigeons?" cried Uncle Lisha, adjusting his spectacles to verify his first sight of the proud little hunter's trophy.

"Me an' Gran'ther shot 'em with a gun!" Sammy responded, and marched into the kitchen, where he was received with excla-

mations of wonder and admiration by his mother and Aunt Jerusha; and even Drive got up from his place to sniff the birds, though he evidently thought them hardly worth the fuss that was being made over them; and the baby was given a tail feather to play with.

"Naow, I'll put right on my apron an' pick 'em, an' then won't we hev us a pigeon pie aouten the pigeons aour little hunter man got!" said Aunt Jerusha. She sang in a cracked voice, as she stepped across the kitchen in her brisk, jerky, rheumatic way:

> "When I can shoot my rifle clear
> Tu pigeons in the skies,
> I'll bid farewell to beef an' beer,
> An' live on pigeon pies."

She tied the apron and began searching for the pocket that held her snuffbox, bending her head awry to look for the obscure slit in her skirt. Then, just as her hand was on the comforting box, her spectacles dropped off, and snatching at them, she lost hold of the box, which tumbled to the floor, the box running one way, and scattering a brown trail; the cover, another way; and the

vanilla bean bounding away on a course of its own. Sammy viewed the catastrophe a moment in speechless consternation, while Drive, with a charge of snuff in one eye, uttered an agonized howl as he clawed at the suffering orb with one hind foot, and the baby set up a sympathetic yell.

"Oh, Uncle Lisher!" cried the boy, rushing in to his steadfast friend. "Aunt 'Rushy tried tu sing, an' she 's comin' all tu pieces! Come an' stop her quick!"

"You don't say!" said the shoemaker, receiving the alarming tidings with philosophical calmness, and listening a moment to the confusion of sounds. "Wal, I guess we 'll hafter git the darkter, 'cause like 's not we would n't git her together right. If we got a laig on where a' arm orter go 't would spile her gait; an' if we got her nose on the back side of her head, she could n't never take no snuff, an' would n't never be happy agin. I guess we won't ondertake that job, but I 'll tell ye what. I got them 'ere shoes done, an' if you 'll go along wi' me, an' not tell nob'dy aouten this fam'ly, I 'll show ye suthin' pooty!"

Uncle Lisha gave a helping finger to his little crony as they set forth across the fields, as happy in present freedom from care as the bobolinks that blithely sang above their brown mates nesting in the tangled clover tufts.

"Hold on, Unc' Lisher!" Sammy cried, letting go and pouncing upon something in the grass. "There 's a — Oh, pshaw! 't ain't nothin' but a red leaf!" ending his triumphant shout in a tone of disappointment. "I thought it was a ripe strawberry."

"No, it 's tew airly for 'em yet," said Uncle Lisha. "But in 'baout a fortni't there 'll be gobs on 'em, an' then, says I, we 'll all come up here an' get sights. My, what a mess o' blows! The graound 's jest white. Naow le' 's keep jes' as still as tew mice," he said, dropping his voice as they began the ascent of a knoll near the edge of the woods, stooping as they neared the summit until he was on all fours and peering cautiously over the top of the knoll.

Then after a moment of watching and wondering, Sammy, lying prone a little be-

hind, was beckoned to a place beside him, and gaining it, saw five fluffy little yellow animals with pricked black ears and black stockings on their slender legs. They were playing no end of cunning pranks near the entrance of a burrow, where a mound of yellow earth was thrown out, hard trodden, and littered with bones and feathers.

"Oh, what cunnin' little doggies!" Sammy whispered in a state of excitement that threatened to become too loud in expression. "Whose be they, Unc' Lisher? Say, can't I have one?"

"S-s-s-h-h! Them 's foxes. Ta' keer you don't skeer 'em," the old man cautioned, and the two spies lay quite still, watching the cubs now tumbling over each other, now engaged in mimic battle, now all but one pretending to fall asleep, while he began burying the leg of a lamb in the loose earth, but desisted when he saw that the eyes of all his mates were upon him, then unearthed the half-buried treasure and sought a new hiding place. Presently at some slight sound beyond them, all suddenly became alert in that direction, and the mother appeared, her

mouth fringed with field mice, for which there was at once a scramble, and yet a fair distribution of them. The cares of housekeeping and maternity had not fallen more lightly on Madam Vixen than they do on many human mothers; her once sleek and bright tawny fur was faded to a pale yellow, and was rough and ragged, and there was the weariness of constant anxiety on her shrewd face as she stretched herself at length on the sward, and interestedly watched her children make way with the tidbits she had brought them.

Their lunch ended, the young rascals made exceedingly free with her, romping about and over her, and receiving no chastisement for their rudeness, but an occasional pretended bite or a light cuff of a fore paw. When the unseen and unsuspected audience had watched the performance until the old man's stiff joints and the child's restless body were tired of keeping still, Uncle Lisha pursed his lips and imitated the squeak of a mouse, whereat the mother pricked her ears and started up, and her children became as alert as she. The sound was repeated,

and she began a slow advance, twisting her head comically as she listened and tried to locate the sound.

So she kept drawing nearer until she was looking straight into Uncle Lisha's eyes, and a suspicion dawned upon her that here was something not quite right. The hair rose on her neck and back; her jaws opened to utter a gasping bark; she sprang backward. The cubs scampered into the nearest opening of the burrow, jostling each other for first place, and disappearing in a twinkling; when the mother turned tail and scudded away to a safe distance beyond, where she gave full vent to her displeasure in continuous gasping barks.

Uncle Lisha led Sammy over to the burrow and showed him the odd assemblage of kitchen middens, — the shanks of a lamb, the foot of a hare, the wings of chickens, ducks, and a partridge, and, most conspicuous of all, the broad, barred pinion of a turkey.

"I s'pect them 'ere b'longed tu Joel Bartlett's ol' gobbler, an' I hearn haow 'at Joel has faound aout this 'ere fox den, an' 'll be

up here tu-night a-diggin' on 'em aout. That 'd spile a lot o' fun for yer daddy next fall, an' I 'm jest a-goin' tu give this 'ere ol' lady a hint tu move."

With that he began filling his pipe, but taking no pains not to scatter tobacco, and lighting it with an unnecessary number of matches, the stumps of which were dropped about the several entrances, where he also spat profusely.

"There," he said, looking with satisfaction on the general untidiness. "I 'll warrant ye she 'll move her fam'ly up inter some laidge in the woods, an' the skunks can hev these 'ere lodgin's arter tu-day. I cal'late she does more good a-ketchin' mice 'an what hurt she does ketchin' turkeys; an' as fer lambs, if folks 'll rub some sulphur ontu 'em, the foxes won't tetch 'em, an' 't would be tew bad tu hev sech fun as they 'll make right handy by for yer daddy, an' sech a good time as they 're a-hevin' on, all spilte jest for nothin', as you might say. An' naow I da' say she won't so much as thank you an' me for a-doin' of her a good turn, but 'll keep a-scoldin' on us for stinkin' up

her haouse wi' terbacker along arter she 's got set up in her new quarters ; but we can stan' it, an' we had a good time watchin' on her. My ! haow pleasant it looks in the woods, an' haow neat the grape blows smells ! It 'most makes me wish 'at I was a ol' fox, a-livin' free in the woods an' fields, 'thaout nob'dy's boots an' shoes tu bother with, nor nob'dy tu take thought on. But then by'm by they 'll hafter turn aout an' shift for their-selves, a-huntin' mice by the squeakin' on 'em, an' stealin' chickens an' turkeys an' lambs, an' a-sneakin' raound the woods arter pa'tridges an' rabbits, an' lookin' aout fer traps 'at 's sot, an' a-larnin' runways, an' gittin' chased by haoun' dogs, an' gittin' shot, an' their own mother not carin' no more 'n if 't was any other fox. So I guess on the hul I 'd ruther be Uncle Lisher, a-shoolin' raoun' the woods an' lots wi' a leetle boy, a-lookin' at what the good Lord hes made for us, thankful tu be right 'mongst it all, an' tu hev som'b'dy tu hum a-waitin' for us, an' a-keerin' for us. Hity-tity, ju' look at this ! "

They were skirting the open edge of the woods, where in the mottled shade of new

leafage a profusion of forest annuals were spreading their tender leaves above the mat of last year's drab and russet, wild ginger, sarsaparilla, bloodroot, moose flower, liverwort, and fern, and the tender sprouts of seedling trees, when there was an outburst of clucking and a furious flutter of gray feathers at their very feet, and a spattering abroad of a number of unaccountable yellow balls that vanished as soon as seen, when the bewitched rumple of gray feathers went tumbling and fluttering along the ground with Sammy in hot pursuit. Uncle Lisha stood still a moment, then with his hat in both hands pounced down upon a bunch of broad-leafed wild ginger, and groping beneath it presently drew forth the prettiest of downy chicks.

Sammy was recalled from his fruitless chase to see and admire it in the cage of Uncle Lisha's hollowed hands. Then, in spite of entreaties and protests, it was carefully set down, and vanished as if the earth had absorbed it.

"Oh, Uncle Lisher, you don't let me hev nothin'!" Sammy cried, almost at the point

of tears. "Whose leetle hen is it? An' why could n't I hev jest one chicken, nor one leetle doggy?"

"Why, sonny, they 'd only run away or die, an' not du nob'dy no good, jes' the same as if I gin you to the ol' fox or the ol' pa'tridge. An' naow I cal'late we 've seen 'baout 'nough for one day, an' we 'll go hum an' see if that 'ere pigeon pie hain't 'baout ready. Here we go, wi' nothin' tu show, but lots tu remember."

CHAPTER VIII

NEW COMRADES

Not many days after this the old shoemaker and his little comrade were strolling along the brook in the idle observation of many curious and beautiful things. Now it was trout flashing from one hiding place to another; now the golden shimmer of a sandbank beneath sunlit ripples; now a sandpiper flitting before them on sickle-shaped wings, or alighting in the water's edge and balancing itself on its slender legs with odd, jerky teetering of its body; now the mossy nest of a phœbe-bird, stuck like a pocket on the face of a rock, and one of its little builders and owners calling sharply from various perches, "Phœbe, Phœbe!"

"That 's his wife's name, and he 's forever a-callin' of her, so 's 't I should think she 'd git sick an' tired o' hearin' on't," Uncle Lisha explained.

They were approaching a grove out of which the brook came, and with its changing babble was heard the clear resonant sound of measured strokes mingling with their own cool, shivering echoes, such as are heard only in leafy woodland interiors, and which alone repeat the bell and flute of the wood and hermit thrushes.

"Someb'dy or 'nother 's a-paoundin' basket stuff," said Uncle Lisha, after listening a moment; "but who on airth it is, is more 'n I can guess."

But the riddle was solved when upon entering the woods they discovered a dingy tent pitched beside the brook, and near it two men and a woman, all with faces the color of new copper cents, and eyes and hair as black as a crow's wing. One of the men was belaboring a peeled ash log from end to end with the head of an axe; the other was splitting long, slender spruce roots in twain; and the woman was weaving a pretty basket of red, blue, and yellow splints.

"Why, good airth an' seas, if it hain't Injuns!" Uncle Lisha exclaimed; and at the name and the recollections of Gran'ther

Hill's tales Sammy's heart sank and his hair arose.

"Injuns! Oh, le' 's run, Unc' Lisher!" he gasped, with a backward tug at the finger he clung to.

"Why, bless his heart, they won't hurt nob'dy, an' mebby we'll git a pooty baskit or so'thin' tu kerry home wi' us," said Uncle Lisha reassuringly, and marched straight into the camp in the most reckless manner, hailing its occupants with a hearty, "Haow d' du." The man who was hammering the log suspended his labor, grinned amiably, and responded: —

"Quiee."

The root-splitter glanced up at the visitors and made a like response, and the woman smiled on the little boy in a way that quite dispelled his fears.

"Gittin' aout baskit splints, be ye?" Uncle Lisha inquired. "Wal, your womern's a-makin' a neat one sartain. An' what 's t'other feller cal'late tu du wi' them spruce rhuts, if I might ask?"

"Sew um canoe," the splint pounder answered laconically.

"Oh, you 're a-goin' tu make a kernew, hey?" the old man asked, and soon descried a great roll of freshly peeled birch bark.

"Yas, make um canoe," the Indian answered. "No git um good bark dar," indicating the lake valley by a nod in that direction. "Tree too small. Me come here five-six year 'go. Make um canoe for Sam Lovet. You know um Sam Lovet?"

"Sam Lovel! Good Lord, yes! I live 'long wi' him, an' this 'ere 's his boy."

"Hees boy? Wal, he nice boy," the Indian said, regarding Sammy with more interest, as did his companions after he had spoken to them in their own language, whose soft monotony fell in with the babble of the brook and the murmur of the wind in the trees as harmoniously as if it were but an other voice of nature. "Lovet good man," he said, leaning his axe against the log and slouching over to a bunch of baskets hanging on a tent pole. He selected a small bright-colored one and put it in Sammy's timid hands. "Me give boy dat for peek um berry;" and Sammy stared speechlessly until prompted by his mentor.

"An' wha' d' ye say for that, Bub?" And then in confusion he stammered, —

"Thank ye, marm."

Uncle Lisha seated himself comfortably at a favorable point of observation, and having filled his pipe offered tobacco to the Indians, who filled and lighted their pipes; while the little boy sat in rapt admiration of his basket, as fascinating in its smoky, woodsy odor as in its bright colors and neat workmanship. When his eyes were taken off it their attention was divided between the nimble fingers of the woman and those of the man, so skillfully splitting the slender roots that the halves were always of like thickness, coaxed to equal division by slight turns of the wrists.

"Haow much be you a-goin' tu tax me for a bow-arrer the right size for a chap like this 'ere?" indicating Sammy by a twist of the thumb.

"Oh, guess twen'-five cen', bow an' one arrer," the Indian answered, taking measure with his eye of the prospective archer. After duly considering the matter Uncle Lisha gave the order with the addition of

another arrow, foreseeing that one would be lost, and that there should be another to send in search of it.

The splint pounder picked up an unavailable bit of basket stuff and at once began fashioning an arrow with a peculiar crooked knife, which he held with his palm upward and always drew toward him. In all their movements these people were so deliberate — as if to-day would wait on them indefinitely and the morrow was not to be considered — that Uncle Lisha could not help thinking how Joseph Hill would envy their infinite leisure. If it were to light a pipe or to save a bit of meat from burning, the one was gone about as deliberately as the other, and one could but think good and bad fortune would be accepted with equal equanimity.

Sammy's heart was won by the gift of the basket, and the Indians had taken as kindly to him, so that during their stay he was a welcome and frequent visitor, with Uncle Lisha, his father, or his mother, whom he brought to the camp and introduced. When it came to building the canoe he was

never tired of watching the patient work, from the smoothing of the ground and driving the stakes, the weighting down of the frame with stones upon the great sheet of bark, the slitting of it and sewing, when the spruce roots came to play their part, the raising of the frame to its place, as gunwales and crossbars, the lining of the canoe with cedar strips, lengthwise and athwart, and the final pitching of seams with turpentine and grease; until the beautiful craft, stanch and light, was ready for voyaging over the shallows of shaded woodland streams or the turbulent depths of the lake.

Sammy became expert enough with the bow to frighten the chipmunks he shot at, and one day came to the camp boasting that he had hit the ear of a hare that he found sitting in her form.

"An' what makes a rabbit have such long ears an' hind legs?" he asked Tocksoose, who was chief spokesman of the Indian trio in their intercourse with their white neighbors.

"Oh, dat come so, long time 'go," Tocksoose answered, as he punched the bark with

an awl and followed it with a thread of root. "Den rabbit have long tail an' short hin' leg an' ear jus' same anybody. Den one day fox be hungry an' chase rabbit, oh, very hard, so rabbit run in hole in rock, — so big hole fox can run in too. Den rabbit go in far end, an' dar lee'l hole go out, jus' mos' big 'nough so rabbit can go t'rough an' fox ketch it by his leg an' pull, an' rabbit pull with fore leg an' cry so hard like baby; squaw hear an' come for help it; ketch hol' ear an' pull so fox le' go leg an' pull tail, so tail pull off short, an' squaw pull rabbit out. But he look so he ain't know hese'f, — ear pull out long, hin' leg pull out long, an' tail all pull off mos'; an' when fox see, he ain't know it was rabbit, an' he jump so far wid dat long hin' leg he can't ketch it. Den when winter come an' snow fall, rabbit set still an' let snow come all over him, so fox can't see him close by if he shut up hees eye; an' now he always have ear an' hin' leg long an' tail short, an' he white in winter."

"That 's a real good story, Mr. Tocksoose," said Sammy, only eager for more.

"An' was it some such way the minks got black?"

"Yas, guess so. You see, Wonakake — dat 's otter — got mad 'cause mink ketch um so many fish, so he chase mink for kill it, an' mink pooty scare. He all white then jus' same weasel in winter, so otter can see it great way off; an' mink can't hide. So he run in where fire burn tree an' rub hese'f on burnt tree so he all black. Den he turn roun' an' walk back, an' by'm by meet otter run hard. Otter ain't know dat black feller, an' ask it, 'You see mink go dis way?' Mink say no, he an't see it. Otter t'ink funny he can smell mink but can't see it, an' run on fast, but never ketch um mink. Mink like um color so well he always keep it, an' ketch 'em more fish as ever, 'cause fish can't see um so easy, an' so he be black now."

"That 's a good story, too," Sammy gave cordial approval. "Won't you tell some more?"

"No, dat all me know for tell um to-day," Tocksoose answered, intent upon his sewing. Sammy thought it strange that a

man of such experience in woodcraft should have but two stories to tell in one day, yet remained silent while he watched Mrs. Tocksoose preparing some trout for cooking.

She slipped six dressed trout crosswise into the cleft of a green wand, tied the cleft end together with a strip of bark, thrust the other end into the ground and slanted this primitive broiler at a proper angle over the coals, and then resumed her basket weaving after washing her hands in the brook, — for she kept them scrupulously clean for this delicate work, though nothing else in the camp showed so much care. Sammy thought Uncle Lisha's mode of cooking fish preferable to hers, but forbore any disparaging comments.

"Did n't you never kill no bears?" he asked, turning his attention to the canoe maker with a view to more stories.

"Yas, me kill um good many bear," Tocksoose answered.

"Haow du you hunt 'em?"

"Oh, bes' time in fall when fust snow come. Den bear go look for place sleep all winter, an' me foller track in snow. Some

time find 'em in hole of rock; den no can get um. Some time he jus' curl up an' go sleep under root where tree blow over; den can git um easy. Jus' shoot an' kill um."

"Oh, hain't that fun?" cried Sammy, hugging his knees.

"Some time; not all time," said Tocksoose. "One day me track um bear so under tree. Den look um in for see. Bear mad for be wake up, jus' same you s'pose you git sleep all good, den somebody come wake you. Bear come out, 'Woof!' Me ketch um foot on stick, fall on back; bear come right top, bite hard — see!" He showed some ugly scars on one hand. "Den open mout' for bite more. My brodder right close by; shoot um bear right in head; fall right on me; blood plenty all over me. Den skin um bear, git um lot grease, git um lot meat, git um bounty. Dat all right."

"That wa'n't all so much fun," said Sammy, and then began teasing for more; but nothing further was to be got from Tocksoose that day, so the boy reluctantly went his way homeward.

"Well, where 's mammy's man been all

this time?" his mother asked as he made his appearance in the kitchen.

"Oh, huntin' an' visitin' 'long wi' the Injuns," he answered, going over to the cradle to inspect the sleeping baby.

"Well, he ought to ask afore he goes off so. Mammy worries when she don't know where her little man is."

"Unc' Lisher don't ask when he goes," Sammy argued in excuse.

"Oh, but Uncle Lisher is a great big growed-up man; the' would n't nothin' hurt him. S'posin' a bear ketched Sammy?"

"I do' know, 'cause I hain't got no brother to shoot him, as Mr. Tocksoose had when a bear come right top on him. Baby could n't, 'cause she hain't big 'nough. Say, I 'm a-goin' tu ask darkter to bring me one."

"Or s'posin' he got lost, same as Aunt Polly did oncte an' would ha' died 'way off in the woods if daddy hed n't faound her?"

"Oh, I 'd holler an' he 'd find me," he answered, in the fullness of perfect faith.

"Well, he must n't go 'way so any more," said Huldah in final disposition of the question.

Having this rule impressed upon him, Sammy's next visit to the Indian camp was made with his mother's permission. As he drew near he heard no sound but the continual babbling of the brook and the occasional joining with it of a wood thrush's song, like a jangle of silver bells. When he came to the place he found it quite deserted, — the dingy tent gone, the beds of evergreen twigs naked of blankets, the fire dead, the last used wooden spit and broiler slanted over the cold ashes beneath the blackened crotches and pole on which the kettle used to swing as it bubbled and seethed so cheerily. The ground was littered with shavings, refuse splints, and scraps of birch bark warped into yellow rolls. It all looked so desolate and deserted that poor Sammy was heavy-hearted enough over the departure of his friends, — gone like summer birds, without warning or farewell.

CHAPTER IX

DEPARTURE OF AN OLD FRIEND

"WAL, Mr. Bow-arrer, where you be'n all this time?" Uncle Lisha asked, trying different views of his visitor over, through, and under his glasses, and at last shoving them up on his forehead. "I sh'll hafter turn ye off an' look me up another boy if you hain't stiddier!"

"I hain't a-goin' tu any more," Sammy said penitently, "'cause mammy says the bears 'il eat me an' I 'll get lost."

"Nat-rally," said Uncle Lisha; "an' naow what you be'n a-doin' on?"

"Oh, shootin' chipmunks an' hearin' stories," said the boy, swallowing ineffectually at a dry mouthful of doughnut. "Say, Unc' Lisher, Mis' Tocksoose can't cook fish half so good as you can. She jes' lets 'em cook 'emselves, an' she 's a woman, tew."

"Yes, sort o' one; but she 's a squaw,"

said the old man apologetically. "But haow many chipmunks did ye git?"

"Wal, not any, quite," Sammy admitted; "but I scairt every one I shot at, most."

"So you scairt the poor leetle creeturs, an' thought it was fun! Wal, I sh'd think you 'd ruther sot an' watched 'em."

"Why, wa'n't it fun tu try tu kill 'em, jes' same as pigeons an' pa'tridges an' foxes?" Sammy asked, not quite understanding the distinction between one life and another.

"Wal, if you kill one o' them it 'll du some good; but if you killed a chipmunk 't would be one happy leetle creetur the less in the world, an' nob'dy the better off. S'posin' the' was tu come along a great big chipmunk, big as a hoss, — yes, forty times bigger 'n you be, — an' he see you a-eatin' yer nutcake, an' he up an' let drive a arrer at ye as big as a waggin tongue, an' it come a-slambangin' clus tu ye an' scairt ye half tu death, you would n't think it was much fun, an' you 'd think he was a gre't mean ugly critter, would n't ye? If I was you I would n't torment 'em no more. It hain't a good way tu kill things jest for the sake o' killin'."

"I shot a frog wi' my bow-arrer," Sammy confessed, not without pride in the achievement. "Killed him jest as dead!"

"What! You be'n a-killin' frogs? Did n't ye know that 'ld make the caows give bloody milk?" Uncle Lisha demanded in a tone of unusual severity.

"Will it, true, Uncle Lisha?" Sammy asked, in no little fear of the consequences of his doughty deed.

"That 's what they useter tell me when I was a boy, an' I believed 'em," said Uncle Lisha. "Anyways, if I was you I would n't kill no more, 'cause they don't do no hurt livin' nor no good dead."

"Nor humbly ol' tuds?" Sammy asked.

"No, indeed! Why, one on 'em 'll ketch more caowcomber bugs 'n you can shake a stick at, an' if you kill 'em the' 'll come warts on your hands!" said the old man with great emphasis.

"Oh, dear!" Sammy sighed; "things I can shoot, I must n't; things I can, I can't shoot. What 's the use o' havin' a bow-arrer?"

"Oh yes, the' 's lots o' things. There 's

the rats 'at lives in the suller; an' he can let flicker at the red squirrels every time he sees 'em, for they kill the leetle birds in the nest. He just watch that ol' tud 'at lives 'n under the doorstep when he comes aout this evenin' an' he won't wanter kill him, no more 'n he will the chipmunks an' frogs when we 've watched them a spell."

At milking time Sammy kept close oversight of the operation to see if the murder of the frogs was avenged, and was much relieved that no telltale stains discolored the white streams. At dusk he was on the watch when the venerable old toad came scuffling forth from his cool retreat, and was delighted to see the solemn winks, the nervous twitch of the hinder toes, and then the lightning-like flashing out of the long tongue and the sudden disappearance of a doomed fly.

The next day Uncle Lisha took him out to the sunny bank of the brook, beloved of chipmunks, and together they watched the frolics of the pretty creatures about holes whose neat entrances showed no traces of the inner earth removed, and saw them fill

their pouched cheeks with the small stores they gathered and brought home, and then the old shoemaker beguiled them into chasing the leafy end of a willow wand as he dragged it to and fro before them, until the youthful observer was quite charmed with their pretty tricks and lost desire to take their lives.

Then Uncle Lisha crept down to the brook where a green bullfrog sat on a tuft of wild grass and began gently tickling his sides with the tip of the wand. After the first shiver of surprise the frog blinked and his mouth seemed to widen with a smile of contentment; he edged around until he squarely faced his charmer and swelled out his sides until the last wrinkle was effaced. The wand was now carefully laid aside and Uncle Lisha's hand stealthily took its place without the change being noticed by the entranced frog. The thumb tickled one side, the forefinger the other, for a moment, and both were firmly but gently closed and the astonished victim was lifted sprawling and struggling from his seat, clawing at the imprisoning hand and at last bellowing outright, which he continued to do when he was

set down at some distance from the brook bank, and he kept up the outcry while he leaped madly toward the sheltering depths and disappeared beneath the surface with a resounding splash. Sammy rolled in the grass in such a paroxysm of laughter that he came near following the frog, and when he had recovered was quite ready to admit that this was far greater fun than shooting chipmunks and frogs.

As they went home he got a shot at a red squirrel at short range, and as much by good luck as by skill knocked the bloodthirsty little rascal off the limb along which he was stealing to a nestful of unfledged vireos. On the same day a rat was allured from the subterranean depths of the cellar by a sprinkle of meal and his life ended by a well-aimed arrow. Life began to assume a brighter aspect to Sammy's view.

One summer day Sammy aspired to the glory of killing a woodchuck, and it occurred to him that Drive might be a help to him, though just how he had no very definite idea. His father always took Drive when he went hunting foxes and raccoons, therefore why

should he not be useful in woodchuck hunting? So, equipped with his bow and two arrows, he went to the old hound where he lay basking in the sun.

"Come, Drive," he called cheerily; "le' 's go an' kill a woo'chuck!"

The old dog beat the ground languidly in recognition of his young master's voice, but made no further movement until the invitation was repeated. Then he raised his head and regarded the child with a look of puzzled inquiry on his furrowed brow.

"Yes, Drive! Kill woo'chuck!" Sammy cried, presenting the bow for olfactory inspection, but Drive failed to recognize it as a sporting weapon, and snapping at an intrusive fly stretched himself at length again with a restful sigh. "Oh, come, you ol' dog! Don't be so lazy," said Sammy, and coaxed and patted until the hound arose stiffly and followed a little way, slowly wagging his tail, and the boy ran on, feeling himself now indeed a hunter with a hound at heel.

Presently looking back he saw the old dog sitting down, only following with his

eyes, and then arising turned stiffly and awkwardly, uttered an impatient whine, and hobbled to the lilac tree, where after briefly going through the usual form of nest-making, he lay down. Sammy felt himself grievously slighted, and vented his vexation in some disparaging remarks as he went on alone to his hunting ground.

There sure enough was a woodchuck, sitting bolt upright on his earthen threshold, but not all the young hunter's care and caution availed to bring him within bowshot of the wary quarry, that seemed to have an eye on every side, for when Sammy stealthily stalked him from behind almost within range, down went the brown form as if swallowed by the earth, and out of its depths came a chuckling derisive whistle. Drive's presence could have availed nothing but to hasten the result, yet Sammy's only consolation for failure was in attributing it to the dog's perversity, for which he gave him hard names and bitter reproaches, that he was afterward glad were unheard by their object. He made the round of all the woodchuck resorts known to him, with no better

fortune, and then went home in no happy frame of mind. There lay the old dog under the lilac, whose shade had slowly slid away and left him in the full glare of the sun.

"Oh, Drive, wa'n't you a mean, lazy ol' thing not to go 'long wi' me, an' such lots o' woo'chucks!" Sammy called out as he came near. But there was no responsive beat of the slender tail, nor lifting of the grizzled head in recognition of the childish voice. "Wal, you be lazy if you won't wiggle your tail!" Sammy said, wondering at this strange unwonted apathy. "Drive! Drive! What ails ye?" Still there was no sign. A swarm of flies buzzed unmolested about the ruffled brow and crept at will over the silken ear, always till now so sensitive. The hooped, mottled side was rigid; there was no tremor of the great feet stirred in some glorious chase of dreamland.

The mysterious essence of life that dwells in men and dogs, and dreams dreams, had departed forever to the happy hunting grounds, where perhaps dreams come true.

Sammy lifted one of the long soft ears;

it was cold as stone, though the hot sun shone full upon it. A great awe and grief came upon him, and he ran in to his mother, choking with sobs.

"Oh, mammy!" he cried, burying his face in her lap, — "Drive 's dead, an' — an' I called him names the last thing I said tu him!"

Huldah and Aunt Jerusha, and later Uncle Lisha and Timothy Lovel, went out to verify the sad announcement, and when Sam came in from hoeing, the heavy news was imparted to him.

A group of sincere mourners stood around the grave, made restful to look upon by a lining of ferns, and when Sam tenderly assigned to it his faithful old friend and companion, he said, with a tremor in his voice, "It somehaow seems 's 'ough men lived tew long, erless dawgs did n't live long enough."

CHAPTER X

THE PUPPY'S EDUCATION

In spite of Sam's grief for the old dog, within the week he brought home a puppy with blue mottled sides, black saddle and tail patches, a rat-like tail, sprawling, crooked tan legs, a brow prematurely furrowed by sorrows yet unknown, and black and tan ears that bedraggled an inch of their tips in his basin of milk. He was the unfinished picture of his aged predecessor, whose honored name was at once bestowed upon him, and whose place it was hoped he might worthily fill. Of course, Sammy and he at once became great cronies and constant companions.

The boy soon began the education of the puppy, a task which he felt himself quite competent to undertake, not by experience, but by inheritance from his father, a successful fox hunter and wise instructor of hounds. He did not ask his father's advice nor

acquaint him with his plans, perhaps thinking to surprise him with a well-trained young hound, or perhaps fearing that his ideas and his father's might not quite agree. He chose, rather, his little sister for his confidante and assistant, she having arrived at an age to make her his companion and a sharer in most of his pastimes.

One sunny and dewy morning while he was partaking of make-believe tea and bread and butter with her out of acorn cups and crockery shard plates in her playhouse by the leach tub, the puppy suddenly made himself an unwelcome member of the company. As he sprawled upon his young master to bestow a caress, he cleared the barrel of all its outsetting of dishes, and the Barmecide feast they held, with one sweep of his long, slender tail. Then being repelled by a vigorous cuff, he attempted to bestow a similar token of affection on the chubby sister, which overturned her and the block upon which she sat, and smothering her tearful outcry in a shower of dog kisses, seized her beloved rag doll, dragged it from her arms, and was just making off with it when his

flight was stopped by Sammy's catching him by the tail. As he twisted and turned to repel this rear attack, he was caught more securely by the scruff of the neck, and the doll was dropped and quickly restored to the little mother.

"Lay daown!" Sammy commanded, pulling the puppy's legs from under him, one by one, while he pressed him to the ground and sitting astride his back held him in that position in spite of his struggles.

"Lay daown, sir!" Sammy repeated, and triumphantly called to his sister, "See haow quick he l'arns!"

"Mean ol' fing," she sobbed, with angry glances through her tears. "Me hate him."

"That ain't nothin'; what he wants is tu git tu huntin'. Say, Sis, you go an' git your kitty an' we 'll l'arn him tu foller her track."

"I 'fraid he 'll eat kitty same 's he eat dolly," the little sister protested.

"Pooh!" Sammy scoffed, "he can't ketch her. She 'll climb up a tree 'fore he c'n git her!"

Being at last persuaded that no harm could come to her pet, she went in and presently reappeared with a half-grown kitten hanging over her arm in limp, quiescent discomfort, the mother cat following close at her heels in some anxiety for the welfare of her offspring. The cat stopped on the doorstep, beguiled by its sunny warmth, wherein she stretched herself, and through half-closed lids lazily watched her kitten's being borne away, with Sammy in advance, dragging the reluctant puppy by one ear, out among the straggling, scraggy apple trees. The boy halted at the wall on the further side, and, holding the young hound between his knees, issued his orders.

"There, Sis, you put her daown there, an' let her foller you hum. Mog along kinder easy, an' don't go tew straight."

The kitten set down in the wet grass, put forth one tentative paw, withdrew it and shook the dew from it, put forth the other fore paw and withdrew it with a like protest against the unpleasant moisture, and then followed its little mistress in a series of trots and gallops, stopping now and then to mew

a complaint, but for the most part keeping very close to the short, brown flannel skirt of its young mistress.

"It 's too bad wet poo' kitty's foots! I wanter carry poo' kitty!" she cried, stooping to take the kitten in her arms.

"Don't ye! Don't ye!" Sammy shouted. "You wanter l'arn her to run away from dawgs, or some on 'em 'll be a-killin' on her fust you know! Hunt 'em, Drive, hunt 'em, good dawg!" and he laid his pupil on to the fresh trail.

The dog knew not what to make of it all at first, then as his nostrils caught the reeking scent, he snuffed it eagerly, his slender tail threshing his ribs while he whimpered in ecstasy of this new-found delight, till at last he went off on the track, giving tongue brokenly, yet almost melodiously. Sis sped away at the best pace her short legs could command, the kitten now close on her heels, now running before her. When the last apple tree was passed, she stumbled and fell sprawling over her pet. The pursuers were hard upon them, for though the puppy in his eagerness often overran the trail, he was

quickly laid on to it by his young master, and so the kitten had scarcely scrambled out into light and freedom when the puppy was upon it. It uttered a peculiar squall, whereupon its mother came rushing to its rescue with glaring eyes and distended tail, arriving at the same moment with an old Tom summoned from some near retreat by the cry of distress. Both alighting at once upon the puppy, fell to clapper-clawing him savagely. A piteous outcry burst from the frightened hound; the cats yowled, spit, and growled; Sammy shouted, "Scat! Git aout! Come 'ere!" all in the same breath; his sister screamed in an agony of alarm.

Then came the sound of Uncle Lisha's lapstone tumbling to the floor, followed by his voice roaring, "Good airth an' seas! is it Injuns, or Ol' Scratch bruk loose?" as he waddled out adjusting his spectacles and shading his eyes from the sun. Aunt Jerusha, Huldah, Timothy Lovel, and Sam came swarming out of the door.

In their rear could be heard a muffled wail from Mrs. Purington. "Oh, is that mis'able haoun' pup eatin' up all the cats,

or what is 't? Can't nob'dy tell me, or git me my smellin' salts, or du suthin' tu relieve my feelin's? Nobody knows what they be 'at hain't hed 'em!"

"What 's all the haow-de-lo 'baout, Sammy?" Sam asked when the wriggling heap of children, cats, and dog had separated into its several constituent parts, and the medley of noises had subsided to the suppressed sobbing of the little girl, the cooing endearments of her mother and Aunt Jerusha, and the whimpering of the trembling puppy.

The boy told the story as well as he could in his present shame and confusion, truthfully and without excuse, except his desire to promote young Drive's education.

"I guess I would n't try tu break him on aour cats no more," his father said, after listening patiently; "if he should get a few more sech cat-clawin's he 'd cal'late the' wa'n't nothin' better tu find tu the end o' no sort o' track."

"The' won't nob'dy tell me nothin'," Mrs. Purington moaned between deep inhalations of hartshorn, "but I b'lieve that 'ere

boy hes be'n pooty nigh, — snooph, — fur 's I know, aout an' aout killed — snooph-ah — his little sister! 'T would be all right if he hed, I s'pose, 'cause he 's Sa-ammy, an' she hain't nothin' but a gal, an' no name tu her back only Sis — snooph-ah! I should think you would scratch 'raount an' dig up one o' some sort afore that 'ere boy does kill her an' not a thing tu put on her tombstun. If her gran'ma's name hain't good enough for a Lovel, — which the Bordens was 'spectable folks if they did n't go huntin', an' no more did the Pur'n'tons, — mebby her gre't-gran'ma Borden's would, — Polly Ann. But no, that could n't be 'spected. Will anybody tell me if he hes killed her? You might know he would, — fetched up tu go huntin', not vallyin' life one atom." She caught sight of a cricket crawling on the floor and promptly crushed it with her foot.

"Why the' hain't nob'dy killed, mother," Huldah assured her, and Mrs. Purington consoled herself with a longer sniff of hartshorn. "I do' know but what Polly is a good name, an' it 'll please aour Sis. It 's queer we never thought on't. An' Polly 's

short for Mary tew, which is good enough name for anybody. But I guess we 'll leave off the Ann."

Mrs. Purington heaved a deep sigh, and filling its place with a long inhalation of ammonia, tried to content herself with this partial honor paid the maternal Borden.

CHAPTER XI

PEACH DAUNT

Polly was in the habit of entertaining her brother with relations of her doll's adventures, none of which he ever witnessed; and of the richness and variety of that young lady's wardrobe, which were invisible but to the eye of faith, for to other vision she never wore but one dress, and that soiled and much the worse for wear. In emulation, Sammy began to give rein to his imagination, and told marvelous tales of a boy friend of whom Polly was never able to get sight.

"I seen Peach Daunt to-day," he would begin, when Polly, after apologizing for Malviny's not wearing her "new pink caliker and Leghorn bunnit," doubled her in the middle and set her against the orchard wall.

"Peach Daunt! What a funny name," said Polly.

"Well, I can't help it. It 's the name they give him. Oh, you 'd orter see the clo'es he 's got! He 's got a blue cwut wi' yaller buttons — gold, I guess, they be" —

"Malviny 's got a string o' gold beads 'at goes twicte 'raound," Polly interrupted.

"Sho! I 'll bet they hain't nothin' only yaller thorn apples!" Sammy scoffed. "Peach Daunt's buttons is gold."

"Malviny got threw aouten a waggin an' broke her neck, an' has tu wear 'em tu cover up where the darkter mended it."

"Sho! Peach Daunt don't want no ol' beads! He could have a peck on 'em if he did. But you 'd orter see the candy! Bull's eyes, an' sticks, an' hearts, an' lozengers, more 'n you could shake a stick at!"

"Mr. Clapham gives me an' Malviny candy," said Polly, elevating her chubby nose.

"Clapham!" said Sammy scornfully. "Peach Daunt's father keeps store to Vergennes, bigger 'n forty o' Clapham's ol' stores; an' he sells hogsits full of candy every day! He 'd sooner give away a han'ful 'an sell it."

"My, I wish 't I could go there!" Polly sighed, with watering mouth. "Don't Peach Daunt never give you none?"

"Lots," Sammy answered thoughtlessly.

"Why don't you never fetch me none?" she asked reproachfully; and Sammy, unable to explain such ungenerous conduct, shifted to a less feminine subject.

"But my sakes, you 'd orter see his gun!"

"Not a real bang-gun he hain't got?" Polly asked incredulously.

"Yes, sir, ju' like daddy's, only not so big; just right for a boy tu handle, an' caplock, an' all curlequed off wi' brass trimmin's, an' you can shoot at anything with it."

"Oh, Sammy! Don't you wish you had one?"

"M-m-m-m!" he groaned at the suggestion of such a wild dream. "You 'd orter see all the squirrels he gits, pidjins, an' pa'tridges. Oh, piles on 'em!"

"'F I 'd orter, why don't I; why don't I see him?" Polly asked.

"He don't never come no furder 'n Stunny

Brook; he won't," said her brother awkwardly, parrying this reasonable question.

"Why, I go there fishin' 'long wi' you lots o' times. What is the reason I can't when he comes?"

"'Cause there 's a lynk hantin' 'raound there, an' he 'd scare you awful," Sammy said, forced to evolve a new creature from his imagination to guard his unreal hero.

"A lynk? What sort o' critter be them?" Polly asked.

"Oh, gre't big sorter cats, some like a painter, an' some not," he answered, in doubt to describe a beast of which he had only a vague idea. "Oh, they 're awful ugly, I tell ye!"

"Did you an' him see the lynk?"

"Guess we did; lots o' times, an' heard him holler. Oh, awful!" said Sammy.

"I sh'd thought you 'd shot him," said Polly.

"Peach Daunt wa'n't huntin' lynks, an' more 'n that, 'f you don't kill 'em fust lick, they 'll kill you. I guess Peach Daunt da'sn't."

"I sh'd think you 'd git daddy tu shoot

him," Polly said. "He hain't feared o' nothin', an' he can kill anything."

"My sakes, no!" Sammy gasped, and adroitly shifting from dangerous ground, again began enlarging upon the wonderful possessions of his mythical friend, until Polly was quite consumed with envy of her brother's grand acquaintance, and walked slowly home, pouting and speechless.

But at dinner she suddenly recovered speech, and piped up shrilly above the clatter of crockery and knives and forks, to Sammy's consternation, "Oh, say, daddy, Sammy he see a wink down t' the woods, a gre't awf'l ugly wink!"

"A what?" Sam Lovel demanded, staring at the little girl over a mouthful of potato poised midway on its passage to his lips, and Aunt Jerusha quit blowing her saucer of tea to ask, —

"What on airth is that precious child a-talkin' abaout?"

Sammy, turning hot and cold in quick succession, groped with his foot among the others beneath the table for Polly's, but did not find it, and she repeated with loud con-

fidence, "A wink, a gre't awf'l ugly wink! Did n't you, Sammy?"

"I never said I seen a wink," he declared doggedly, more indignant at being charged with a misnomer than ashamed of the falsehood. "I said a lynk!"

"You seen a lynk, Sammy?" asked his father with open incredulity. "Oh, sho, naow!"

"I don't care, I did!" Sammy stoutly protested. He determined to stand by this creation of fancy at all hazards, but trembled to think what he should do if he were called on to defend his more audacious invention of Peach Daunt. The sight of a wild beast in the verge of the great forest was not a stark improbability, but clandestine meetings there with a fabulous boy was too absurd a story to impose upon the credulity of his elders.

"Where d' you see him, — on the ground or up a tree?" his father asked.

"Runnin' 'long the graound an' climbin' up a tree," Sammy answered, taking two chances of being right.

"Wal, naow, that seems kinder reason-

able, but I guess it was a coon," said Sam, interested. "What for a lookin' crittur was 't?"

"Sort o' like a cat," Sammy answered promptly, sure in this particular.

"Mebby 't was one o' aour cats," his father suggested. "There 's 'nough on 'em, — the ol' maltee cat, an' the ol' brindle Tom, an' young Tom, an' Sis's yaller kitten."

"'T was bigger 'n all on 'em," said Sammy, with no idea of having his beast belittled.

"What kind o' tail did he hev, an' what color was he?" Sam asked.

"Oh, 't wa'n't turrible long nor turrible short, an' he was kinder black an' kinder yaller," said Sammy, finding himself driven to very uncertain ground, and feeling for a middle course off of it.

"Ah-h-h!" Sammy's father said, in a tone half derisive, half reproachful, "you be'n a-yarnin'! The' hain't no sech lookin' wild crittur. A lynk 's gray, an' got a short tail."

Sammy slunk out of doors, choking with mortification.

"Tattle-tale!" he blurted out angrily to Polly, as she followed his retreat. "I won't never tell you nothin' again as long 's I live an' breathe."

"What be we goin' tu du tu stop him tellin' sech whoppers?" Huldah asked.

"Oh, boys has got tu. 'T ain't no more 'n the stories in books, an' we buy them."

Polly judiciously held her peace concerning Peach Daunt.

CHAPTER XII

THE LYNX

When the Indian arrows were hopelessly lost and their place poorly supplied by clumsy substitutes, fashioned by Uncle Lisha, Timothy Lovel, and Sam, Sammy began to desire a deadlier weapon than the bow, and cast longing eyes upon his father's guns. The ponderous rifle, popularly known as the Ore Bed, for its weight of metal, was quite beyond his hope of aiming for many a year to come, but when he was permitted to handle the longer, but lighter, smooth-bore, he was rejoiced to find he could raise it for an instant to an off-hand aim, and thereupon begged earnestly to be allowed to go hunting with it. This was of course refused for the present, but with a half promise that he might do so "one o' these days." This was much pondered, and not forgotten by the boy.

In due course of time it happened one day that all the grown-up inmates of the Lovel homestead were abroad except Uncle Lisha, who was left in charge of the house and the two children. For the most part he sat on his bench, working at a pair of new shoes, answering as well as he could the children's endless questions, and doing his best to satisfy their insatiable appetite for stories of old times. Now and then he would get upon his feet, and after brushing the scraps and shreds from his apron make an inspection of the kitchen, look out the door, up and down the road, and comment on the unusually infrequent "pass," note hour and minutes marked by the hands of the tall clock, and then go back to the shop, glad to retire from the oppressive, unwonted quiet of the room, made the more noticeable by the deliberate, muffled tick of the clock, and the drowsy buzzing of flies on the windows. Now and then, when the children could not extract another tale from their story-teller, they ran out to play in the yard, and Polly's doll was captured by Indians over and over again, and rescued after sea-

sons of savage captivity; was treed by hordes of wolves, followed by panthers, always to be saved just in the nick of time by the mighty hunter and Indian fighter, Sammy. When invention of adventures was exhausted, they went into the shop, with sharpened appetites for stories, but ashamed to ask for more. Uncle Lisha, fully expecting a fresh demand, cudgeled memory and wits for a way to meet it as he stared out abstractedly over the bright September landscape. Aftermath and woodland were as green as woods and meadows of June, yet of a riper tint, and a changed depth and slant of shadows.

"Wal, this 'ere 's a neat time for younkets tu play aou'door, hain't it, naow?" he said, uttering the happy thought suggested by the beauty of the day.

"Ya-as," Sammy admitted.

"Yes, sir, this 'ere 's one o' the days," Uncle Lisha said, with greater emphasis.

"Wha' 'd you say, Uncle Lisher?" the boy asked, pricking his ears; "one o' these days 'd you say it was?"

"Yes, sir, jest one o' these 'ere days I 'd be a-playin' aou'door if I was a younket, or

aout yonder in the woods a-huntin' pa'tridge, if I was twenty year younger 'n I be."

By some sign common to the freemasonry of childhood, Sammy signaled Polly out of doors and out of hearing of Uncle Lisha, and whispered loudly, "Say! 'd you hear him say that it 's one o' these days?"

Polly nodded, though not comprehending the drift of it all.

"An' you know daddy tol' me I might go a-huntin' wi' his real, shootin', growd-up folks' gun 'one o' these days.' Naow, le' 's me an' you git it an' go; 'cause you see, this day 's one of 'em, an' he won't care!"

"You think Unc' Lisher let us?" Polly asked, a little scared by the audacious proposal.

"We hain't his children, an' he hain't got no business not to let us, 'long as daddy said we might when 'one o' these days' come. We won't ask. Come!"

The argument was convincing, and without further demur she followed his cautious footsteps to the kitchen door, which was opened and entered, a wooden-bottomed chair moved to position under the gun hooks

and mounted, the gun, powder horn, and shot bag taken from them, and out of doors, and all accomplished so noiselessly under favor of the fortune that no less frequently attends naughty children than it does their naughty elders, that Uncle Lisha's attention was not attracted.

Crouching as they ran, they got around the house until the rear of the woodshed was reached, and they were hidden from their guardian in the shop. Then they stopped a moment to regain the breath that had almost gone out of them in gasps of fear and painful repression. Sammy crawled through a hole in the back of the shed and secured a wasp nest for wadding, and then the pair laid a straight course for the woods, keeping in range of the barn. During the purloining of the gun the young hound, grown almost to his full height, but awkward and unbiddable in puppyhood, was harrying a woodchuck in the pasture wall, to the great relief of Sammy, who was aware of the risk of betrayal by Drive's unrestrainable demonstrations. But, now they were safely out of Uncle Lisha's sight, the

dog's company would be welcome enough. When he desisted a moment from digging and discovered his young comrades crossing the field, the boy carrying the gun on his shoulder in such pride that he felt himself growing an inch a minute, he galloped after them with one reluctant look backward at the stronghold of the woodchuck. Drive had learned from the wise teaching of his master that the gun brought the reward of hunting, having already killed for him several squirrels, a treed woodchuck, and a running hare, and now expressed his joy at going hunting with the children, careering madly about them and far before them, uttering a medley of yelps and deep-mouthed challenges, then tearing back at top speed and leaping up at the gun, to the impeding of Sammy's progress and imminent risk of knocking him over, and now, by many unmistakable signs, asking for help to dislodge the woodchuck from its stronghold.

"No, Drive, can't," Sammy declared resolutely. "Daddy says we must n't pull down no wall for woo'chucks. Come on int' the woods an' git a pa'tridge or suthin'."

Sammy did not know that a hound was not exactly suited to partridge hunting, and Drive was ready for the pursuit of anything by scent except cats, of which he had unpleasant recollection.

They had scarcely entered the woods before he scented game and began working up the trail, with Sammy following so close that his shins were rapped by the dog's slender tail at every step, and Polly, awed by the dark, mysterious interior that was opening before her, stuck as closely to her brother's heels.

Suddenly there was a roar of half a dozen pairs of wings as Drive ran into the midst of a company of grouse dusting in the powdered mould of a decayed tree trunk. The dog stared after them until the last one disappeared, and then looked inquiringly at his young master, as if to ask, "Did n't I do that in good style?" while Sammy stared as intently at the blurred forms vanishing among boughs and shadows, hoping that one might alight within sight and range. Then the dog trotted forward in quest of new achievements until out of sight, but still

making his whereabouts known as he threshed brush and trunks with his busy tail and snapped dry twigs underfoot. Presently the sound of the tail beats ceased, and then the dog came skulking back with hackles bristling and tail lowered.

"Why, dawg!" Sammy said to him, searching the dark shade beyond for the cause of alarm, "you look as if ol' Maltee an' her hul fam'ly was arter ye. What is 't?"

"Oh, Bub! see! see!" the little sister said, almost in a whisper, clutching at his sleeve and pointing eagerly upward at something crouching on a great branch of a tree just beyond the partridges' dusting place.

Following the direction of her finger, Sammy saw a pair of big, round, yellow eyes glaring at him out of a gray chucklehead, the pricked ears tipped with tufts of black hair, all of which, with a ruff flaring out behind the head, made such a fierce-looking visage that the boy wished himself and his companions well out of the woods, and would have quickly betaken himself thence if the eyes of Polly had not been upon him.

It would never do to show the white feather in her presence, so he sidled up to the nearest tree, with Polly sticking close to his side and Drive cowering behind, in which position only he dared utter a growl at the biggest cat he had ever seen crouched along the bough, eyeing the trio closely, yet with insolent indifference. It was a formidable-looking beast, and Sammy was glad to remember that the gun was still loaded with the charge of BB shot that he had seen his father pour into the barrel. He cocked the gun and raised it to a rest against the great tree and got a steady aim right between the yellow eyes.

The beast seemed to recognize a menace in this, for it bared its sharp, white teeth with a gasping hiss and did not take its eyes off the boy, who pulled on the trigger without effect till he surmised the gun was only half cocked, and then, assuring himself that it was, put a second finger and all his strength on the trigger. It yielded, and the striker, a clumsy bit of iron screwed into the place of the discarded flint, came down with a crack on the cap, the woods were filled with

a far-echoing roar, pierced by a terrific scream, and through the slowly lifting cloud of smoke Sammy had a glimpse of a gray body curving down toward him. It struck the earth heavily, but went three feet in the air with a quick rebound, repeated after each fall. As the ground descended slightly, each rebound brought the beast, with all four big, talon-armed paws lashing out blindly, a little nearer to the dazed group, till Polly's skirt was caught in a sweeping stroke that cut it like knives. Then Sammy came to his wits, and, catching hold of his sister, ran pellmell down the slope with her, preceded by Drive, whimpering and tucking his tail to its tightest between his legs. There was no halt till the brook was crossed. Then, as they stood listening to the threshing of the ground by the wounded beast and its growling and gasping growing fainter, till scarcely heard above the babble of the brook and their own hard breathing, Sammy began reloading his gun.

"What be him?" Polly asked, when she found voice.

"Don't know," Sammy answered, intent

upon pouring half his small palmful of powder into the long barrel, slanted at a gentle incline to get muzzle on a level with his shoulder. "'T ain't no painter, nor one o' Mr. Antwine's things 'at ketches naughty childern, 'cause 't ain't got no tail tu speak on."

"Will he kill us, you s'pose?" she asked.

"He hain't, anyway, an' I guess he won't if I ever git this ol' gun loaded. I guess he's dead or gone off, for I can't hear him no more," he continued, when the loading of the gun was accomplished and the cap on the nipple. "Come on; le' 's we go an' see."

Polly shook her head very decidedly, and ruefully regarded her torn frock.

"'Fraid cat!" Sammy said scornfully. "Come on, Drive. Come! Sic 'em, s-s-sic 'em!" But Drive was as loath as Polly. "Wal, I 'm goin', anyway." His courage was not to be put to the test, for at that moment he and Polly were startled by a voice roaring: —

"Good airth an' seas! You little torments! What be you a-doin' here?"

Congratulating himself on his success in escaping for a while from story-telling, Uncle Lisha hammered and stitched in great contentment until at last he became aware that an unusual and protracted interval of silence was pervading the premises, and as he held it to be a sure sign that the children were asleep or in mischief if they were quiet, he thought it time to inform himself in which condition they were now, praying that it might be the former.

He went to the shop door and looked abroad, but they were nowhere to be seen. Then he looked into the kitchen, hoping to see the pair lying asleep on the settee, but it was empty and silent. As he cast a glance around the room, he noted the chair set out of place and the empty gunhooks above it, whereat he conjectured at once that mischief had been brewing, and hurried out of doors in great anxiety. The prodigious fuss he made in moving his fat body quickly on his short legs frightened the staid old hens from their songs of contentment and leisurely strolling, and sent them cackling and scampering; and his repeated stentorian

calls, "Sam-mee! Child'n!" brought no response.

His first thought was to make at once for the nearest woods, whither the truants would naturally betake themselves; but before doing so he looked into the cistern, though the cover was in its proper place, and then he went behind the woodshed as a likely resort from observers. Before he got in sight of it, the roar of a gun struck his ear, coming from the woods in the very direction he was about to take, and now took it without further delay, at the best pace he could hold. The sun shone hot on his bare, bald pate, and the leathern apron flapping against his short legs handicapped him, so he untied and shuffled it off as he ran. So, rejoicing to see them apparently unharmed, he came within sight and hail of the truants, who might have heard his loud panting before he called, if their ears had not been so intently turned elsewhere.

"Oh, Unc' Lisher! We seen" — Sammy cried, too full of his wonderful story to realize guiltiness, but the old man cut him short with an unwonted sharpness.

"Sammy Lovel! you desarve a-hidin', an' I guess you 'll git it, tew, when your father gets hum, an' comes tu know!"

"Don't care," Sammy resumed, not to be denied the telling of his story. "We seen the awfullest thing, an' I shot him right in the face an' eyes, an' he come daown kerlummux, 'most onto us, an' tore Sissy's clo'es, an' we run, an' I guess he 's dead or gone, an' Sissy da'sn't go, nor Drive, an' le' 's we go an' see. My! if he did n't holler!"

"You be'n a-tellin' 'baout seein' critters consid'able, long back, an' I reckon you kinder dreamt 'em nights, an' fixed 'em up daytimes 'til you b'lieved 'em, but I 'm 'feard you 're making up this 'ere, aouten a hul side o' luther," Uncle Lisha said in a tone so severe that Sammy's heart was near breaking. "An' you hooked your daddy's gun, an' run away wi' Sis, wi'aout askin'!"

"No, Unc' Lisher," the boy protested, swallowing first at a lump which would not go down. "Daddy tol' me I might go huntin' wi' his gun 'one o' these days,' an' you said it was 'one o' these days,' an' so we went, an' we did see a awful big thing

up a tree, an' I shot him, an' daown he come, an' we run aout here. Did n't he, an' did n't we, Sis ? "

Polly nodded repeated emphatic affirmatives to his statement, and Uncle Lisha was so far convinced as to ask, " Where was 't ? "

" Come on, an' I 'll show ye ! " cried Sammy, and led on across the brook, when he fell back to Uncle Lisha's side and pointed rather than led the way.

" Better gi' me the gun," said the latter, taking the weapon and carrying it at a ready, for all his skepticism.

A few steps further brought them to the scene of the late encounter ; and there in the midst of torn mould and scattered leaves lay a great Canada lynx, outstretched as the last breath had left it, the half-open mouth displaying the sharp fangs and lolling tongue, one glazed yellow eye glaring blankly, the other, pierced by a shot, oozing blood from its empty socket. Even stark dead it was a wicked-looking brute, and the sudden, unexpected sight of it made the boy start, as it did the old man.

"Good airth an' seas, it 's a lynk!" he shouted.

"A lynk?" Sammy repeated in great perplexity. "Why — why — he don't look a mite like them 'at I see behind the orchard!"

"Yes, sir, a lynk it is, as sure as guns," said Uncle Lisha. "You see he 's a raal giniwine one, an' yourn wa'n't, ezackly. Wal, wal, wal, you be a buster, Bub, an' I 'm praoud on ye, an' so 'll your daddy be; but you did n't orter hook the gun, an' I s'pect you orter git a lickin'."

He lifted the animal by a hind leg, and throwing it over his shoulder, led out of the woods, and then when Polly had her fill of wondering, fearful admiration over the grim trophy, the party set forth homeward, Sammy bearing a part of the burden by a fore paw. Polly walked behind, now regarding the dead beast with awed admiration, now casting rueful eyes upon her torn skirt, but for which she would have at once run home to brave a scolding, for the honor of being the first to tell the story of the great adventure, while Drive now and then ventured a neck-

stretching sniff at the terrible cat, and sprang away in fresh accession of fear whenever the free fore paw swung toward him.

As the company neared the house Aunt Jerusha, Huldah, and Sam came forth to meet it. Finding the house deserted, they wondered greatly at the cause, as they scoured the premises for the tenants lately left in charge, and wondered more when they discovered the strange procession.

"What in time hes Uncle Lisher be'n a-shootin'?" Sam queried, walking very slowly and looking very intently at the burden borne by the old man and the boy.

"Looks ju' like a string o' suthin'," said Huldah. "Pidjins, is 't, or pa'tridges? Wal, the' 's a snag on 'em."

"My sakes alive, I should say as much!" Aunt Jerusha declared, polishing her glasses with a corner of her apron for a clearer observation. "Wal, I might 's well go 'long back in, an' put on my ev'day gaownd an' apron, an' git ready for pickin'."

"I cal'late the pup got a coon treed, an' Uncle Lisher went an' shot him. By mighty, I hope so; it 'll du 'em both a pile o' good!"

said Sam, without withdrawing his intent gaze.

"An' Bub, tew! He feels as praoud as if he'd done it," said Huldah, glad for her boy's gladness. "Jest see him stub an' brace, will ye? Oh, dear, next thing he'll hafter hev a gun!" and she sighed gently.

"By the gre't horn spoon, it 's a lynk!" Sam burst out. "I thought 't was cur'ous a coon hed n't no more tail! Hurrah for you, Uncle Lisher! Killed more 'n you could fetch home alone, did n't ye? Say, did the pup tree him?"

"Not nary one," the old man panted, as he came up and let fall his end of the bulky, but light burden. "This 'ere boy shot the crittur all hisself 'fore I come anigh! He'll hafter tell haow he got his gun, I guess, hisself. I told him I guessed you 'd ortu lick him, but don't believe you will."

"Sis seen him fust!" the boy cried, in a glow of magnanimity, and then for himself, "Unc' Lisher said 't was 'one o' these days'!"

"Never mind about that naow," said Sam. "You don't mean tu say Sammy shot the crittur, Uncle Lisher?"

"I du, sartain; naow haow was 't, Sammy?"

Then, while the two women purred over them, the two children began in one voice to tell the story, and Sam listened attentively and did his best to unravel the thread of it out of the babel of voices.

"Wal, Bub," he asked, when it was finished in a way and for that time, "does this 'ere lynk look consid'able like the one you was tellin' o' seein' daown by the orchard?"

"No gre't, but I guess, mebby, that wa'n't a reg'lar one," said Sammy, in some confusion.

The news of the Lovel boy's exploit went like wildfire, and the townsfolk came flocking to the house to see the lynx, and its youthful slayer, who was in some danger of being puffed up with his sudden fame, but on the whole carried himself with commendable modesty, and never failed to give his sister due credit for discovery of the beast.

Among the first visitors on the following day was Gran'ther Hill, stamping up the path in exceedingly grim good humor.

"Good-mornin', Cap'n Hill. Come over

tu see the lynk? Wal, he 's right raound here in the woodshed," Sam said, going out to lead the way.

"Mornin'. No, I would n't give a soo-markee tu see no lynk, — seen more on 'em 'an I wanted tu when I was a-trappin' saple. I want tu see that little divil o' yourn 'at shot him all by hisself, I hearn! Stole yer gun an' p'inted for the woods! By the Lord Harry! I did n't s'pose there was any o' that sort o' boys bein' raised naow-er-days. Joseph's boys would n't du no sech a thing, if they be my gran'sons. Josi' 'd tackle a lynk spunky 'nough if the lynk come tu him, but he would n't pick no quarrel with the crittur. But yourn pitched right in. S'pos'n' we take a squint at the tarnal crittur," he said, and moved toward the woodshed, where the lynx lay in state, stretched at full length on the work-bench.

It so happened that Sammy was under the bench, in search of a bit of board to make a toy table for Polly, when the two entered, and remained there undiscovered by them, not at first with any thought of hiding nor eavesdropping, and at last through sheer bashfulness.

"By the Lord Harry, he 's a' ol' buster!" Gran'ther Hill declared, in surprised admiration. "Tell ye what, he 'd a gin the young uns a tough one 'f he 'd only be'n waounded, but that leetle scamp o' yourn took him plum in the head, — put one eye clean aout! Double Bs, was the shot?"

"Yes, an' some threes, — it was loaded for a coon," Sam answered.

"An' the tarnal leetle scamp hooked yer gun an' sneaked off huntin'! It 's tew bad layin' sech temptations afore a boy, Lovel! You 'd orter git him a gun of his own 'at he would n't hafter steal."

"I be'n a-thinkin' mebby," Sam said, and if the hidden listener could have quite believed his ears he could not have withheld some audible expression of joy.

"You see, your gun 's 'baout as long an' heavy as my ol' Deliverance, an' he can't hol' it arm's len'th, an' so long in the stock I don't see haow he can reach the tricker. You wanter git him one 'at he can handle, Lovel," and Sammy did not hear his father's reply, as the two went out and left him free to come forth. Presently he heard his

father calling him, and went to him and the old veteran, with a brightness in his eye and withal a shamefacedness whereof they did not guess the cause.

"Here 's Cap'n Hill come tu see you, Sammy. He 's be'n a-lookin' at your animil," Sam informed him.

"Yes, I wanter shake hands wi' ye an' tell ye 't I 'm praoud on ye, if ye be sech a tarnal leetle fool as to go huntin' wil' beasts on yer own hook! But I like yer spunk, if ye did hook yer daddy's gun. Did he lick ye for that? No? Wal, you desarved it, but ye won't du so agin."

Sammy's heart swelled with pride at the patriarch's qualified praise, and he felt that he ought to be very grateful that he was not whipped, as all seemed to agree he deserved, though he did not understand why.

"That 'ere Antwine Canuck 's a-comin' tu see the show," Gran'ther remarked with disgust, intently scrutinizing an approaching figure. "I got enough o' his breed when I was in Canerdy along wi' Seth Warner, an' I guess I 'll go in an' see Lisher," and with that he entered the shop, attended by Sam.

"Well, seh, Bawb, Ah 'll hear you ketch some pussy. Dat so, prob'ly?" Antoine asked, as he drew near Sammy.

"No, it 's a lynk, Mr. Antwine, 'baout as big a one as ever I see," Sammy answered, resenting such belittling of his exploit. "Come an' look at him," and he led the way into the shed with the air of the owner of a menagerie.

"Huh!" Antoine ejaculated at the first sight of the formidable-looking brute; then quickly reassuring himself, "Oh, dat was one leetly loupcervier! Ah 'll use for keel it in Canada jes' sem you mices. Oh, lot of it, Ah tol' you. Ah 'll keel 'em on mah henroos' good many tam; jes' touch hol' of hees hin' leg an' strack a stone wid hees head of it, sem any cats."

Sammy could not forbear expressing doubt as to this. "I don't b'lieve anyb'dy could kill our ol' brindle Tom so," he said.

"Oh yas; dat jes' heasy lak ile," Antoine asserted, with perfect assurance. "Honly you got for be sure you keel it 'nough, 'cause cat gat nan life. Prob'ly dat loupcervier got for be keel 'baout height

more tam, 'cause sech leetly boy hant be hable for keel it all up wid one shoot."

Sammy found little satisfaction in acting as showman to such an audience, and slipped out quite unceremoniously, whereupon Antoine went to the shop. Gran'ther Hill retreated to the kitchen, but was not left long in peace, for presently Mrs. Purington arrived, burdened with more than her usual "feelin's," which were not relieved when she heard a circumstantial account of the killing of the lynx.

Heaving deep sighs during the recital, when it ended she said, "So that 's what 's come tu the gaownd o' my own spinnin' an' weavin', which I colored it likewise wi' my own hands, tu be tore tu ribbons by wil'-cats! An' that innercent child tu be led inter the jaws o' death, as it ware, by her own an' only brother, arter him a-stealin' of his father's gun loaded dangerous! Oh, dear me, suzzy day! But it hain't no more 'n was tu be nat'rally expected, not one mite more! What 's goin' tu be become o' that 'ere boy is turrible tu think on!"

Sniffing hard at her smelling bottle, she

fixed a steadfast, sorrowful gaze upon her grandson, who was beginning to realize that a hero's wreath is entwined with thorns. But Gran'ther Hill dulled their sharpness when, glowering on Mrs. Purington, and emphasizing his words with a crescendo of thumps of his staff, he growled in his defense.

"I 'll tell ye what, marm, won't be become on him. He won't grow up no puddin'-headed, chicken-hearted, tew-good-for-tu-live sorter chap. He 'll know which end of a gun shoots, an' haow tu shoot it, an' he won't be afeard o' the divil, an' if the' comes a time endurin' of his life 'at his country needs a sojer, she 'll know where to find one, an' a mighty good one, tew, if some blasted ol' fool don't turn tu an' spile him!" And he went stamping outdoors and down the path.

The lynx was taken to the store where Clapham was glad to keep it as long as he could for the customers it attracted. One day a college professor came from Burlington, and offered five dollars for the animal to place in the museum of his institution,

and this, with the five dollars bounty paid by the State, constituted wealth which seemed inexhaustible, until Sammy learned that such a gun as he wanted would cost ten dollars. Then he knew how to invest it, but he felt that his sister ought to share it, and a gun would do her no good.

Then one never-forgotten November day his father came home from Vergennes and brought from the old gunsmith Seavers a brand-new fowling piece with a percussion lock and a walnut stock and a silver sight, — a beauty of a gun in those days. There was also a doll for Polly, with white and pink cheeks, cherry-red lips, real flaxen hair, and eyes as blue as the sky, and that could be made to shut in a way that was wonderful, if not life-like. She was clad in raiment which was a realization of Polly's dreams of Malviny's wardrobe, and brought with her a teaset of the brightest pewter.

Gun, doll, and their outfits were the admiration of grown-up folk, and the happy owners made many of their young mates happy by sharing their use. Not that Sammy ever lent his gun to even his best

friend but by going with it himself, for that was a rule his father taught him strict adherence to ; nor that the new doll ever went abroad but in charge of her mistress ; nor was the teaset ever lent except in her care, though there was not another dish in Danvis that was not freely lent in case of necessity.

CHAPTER XIII

SCHOOL DAYS

Sammy's school education was, like that of most Danvis boys of his generation, got in the district school, taught in summer by a mistress, in winter by some college student, who took this way of earning his tuition fees.

As such Mr. Horace Mumpson first came to teach a winter term in "Deestric' Thirteen," or the "Hill Deestric'," as well known by one title as the other. He returned the next winter and the next, and again after his graduation, instead of beginning the study of what Solon Briggs called a "puffession." Uncle Lisha explained this on the ground that "Mr. Mumpson wa'n't mean enough tu be a lawyer, nor tough enough tu be a darkter or a minister, and lufted for tu teach school." At any rate, he taught the same school term after

term in the winter, until he became as regular a winter fixture of the battered old schoolhouse as its cracked and rusty old stove. The pale, soft-eyed, gentle-mannered, young man was honored and respected by his pupils, though there was not a sixteen-year-old boy among them who could not throw him "arm's len'th" or "side holt," and he was such a favorite with the parents that each household in the district counted the weeks till he should become a member of it in "boardin' 'raoun'."

The summers brought changes and variety, when a female was employed on the base of economy. Sometimes it was a gaunt, sharp spinster, who was a "schoolmarm" by profession or long habit of never doing anything else. She was always a zealous church member, and generally on the lookout for a bereaved deacon or class leader. Sometimes it was a fresh young girl who took this way to earn a little spending money or to help in the support of a large brood of younger children.

Sammy was seven years old when, with his face freshly scrubbed and clothes un-

comfortably new and clean, his mother led him unwillingly to school and put him in charge of Miss Almira Skinner, a lady of many years' experience in life and school-teaching, which had not sweetened her temper nor increased her love of children. By great good fortune he was assigned a seat from which he could reach the floor with his feet, and a desk that he could rest his new spelling book upon, and he derived much satisfaction from scratching and carving various devices upon it in addition to the countless ones it already bore. Huldah insinuated enough of her ample form into the space between the desks to maintain an uneasy hold, while Sammy's lesson of three-lettered words was given him. His eyes wandered from it to watch the elfish tricks of Antoine's numerous progeny making defiant grimaces and shaking their fists at the schoolmistress when her back was turned, and instantly fixing their black eyes demurely on their books when she faced them. When his entranced gaze became held by the naughty pantomime, his mother violated the maternal instincts in withholding reproof,

and in slipping stealthily from the seat and out of doors; then, with her heart smiting her for deserting her boy, she sped guiltily homeward.

It was not long before Miss Skinner's sharp eyes discovered Sammy's neglect of his work, and she reprimanded him so sharply that it appalled him, being, as he supposed, in the presence of his mother. What might he expect when left to his own weak defense, and lo, when he dared to turn his head an instant from his book, she was gone! His heart sank from his body and left in its place the sickness of utter loneliness. The moment strength enough came back to his weak legs, without a thought of proprieties or consequences, he dashed wildly from his seat out of doors, and down the road at top speed, never heeding the imperative tattoo beat by Miss Skinner with her ferule on the shingles of the schoolhouse wall, nor her shrill command, "Come back, this minute!" On he went, like a wild bird escaped from a cage, nor ever checked his pace till, panting and sobbing, he burst into the shop and threw himself upon a pile of leather.

"Why, good airth an' seas, child alive! what is the matter of you? I s'posed you was tu school!" the old shoemaker cried in great surprise.

Sammy hung his head and made no answer.

"I hope aour man hain't been duin' naughty an' got a whippin' the very fust day he ever went tu school, an' in the mornin' tew," his old friend inquired, with a shade of reproach in his tone.

Sammy shook his head.

"Kinder lunsome, mebby?"

The downcast head nodded.

"But I thought his mammy went 'long for tu wont him, an' sorter smooth off the paigs?"

"But she come off when I did n't know it," Sammy answered, coming to speech at last. "I was lookin' at Mr. Antoine's young uns cuttin' up shines, an' the schoolmarm gi' me a scoldin', an' I could n't help it. I hed tu come! Oh, dear! I hate the plaguy ol' school, an' do' want tu go!" The poor boy broke down, sobbing so loudly that Uncle Lisha was afraid he would be heard in the kitchen.

"S-s-s-sh! They 'll hear us a-talkin' on in the other room!" he whispered as audibly. "Le' 's sneak off 'fore they du. I wish 't I hed me my cwut in here, but my shirt 's tol'able clean — put 't on yist'day!" he remarked, inspecting the sleeves, as he slipped off his apron and drew down his chin and the corners of his mouth in an odd grimace to assist him in getting a better view of his shirt front. Then carefully brushing his trousers and washing his hands as well as he could in the soaking tub, he put on his hat, and led Sammy out of doors, the little boy wondering silently what was to come of it, with a sickening dread in his heart of what might be the import. They took a roundabout way, as much out of sight of the kitchen as possible, till the road was reached, and then conversation was resumed.

"Be you goin' tu take me back there, Uncle Lisher?" Sammy ventured to ask in a quavering tone.

"Why, yes, course I be! What would his folks say if they knowed he 'd run away?"

"I 'm goin' tu run furder nex' time, an'

go tu sea on a ship, same as you tol' me your brother did. You see if I don't!" said Sammy desperately.

"He 'd git awful tired o' runnin' so fur," Uncle Lisha said.

"Did you useter haf tu go tu school?" Sammy asked.

"In course. Everybody hes tu 't can, or we would n't know no more 'n dumb beasts."

"They git along jes' as well as folks."

"They can't read no good books, nor write no letters tu one nuther."

"Did you lufter go, Uncle Lisher?" Sammy asked.

"No I did n't, more 's the pity," the old man answered honestly. "Only for what fun I got aouten playin' noons an' re-cesses, an' cuttin' up in school-time, not till the last winter 'fore I went tu l'arn my trade an' could n't go no more. Then I duffed in like a good feller, an' lufted tu."

"Did you ever run away, Uncle Lisher?" Sammy asked anxiously.

"More 'n oncte; I 'm 'feard I wa'n't none tew good," Uncle Lisha confessed.

"An' did you git licked fust?"

"Never missed on't, an' as if that wa'n't 'nough, I ketched it agin when I got hum. That was the fashion them days."

"You s'pose she 'll lick me?" Sammy made out to ask.

"I 'm 'feard she 'd 'most ortu. It 's turrible for tu cut an' run the way you did," said the old man sorrowfully, and poor Sammy's thoughts were too busy with the approaching ordeal for further questions.

"Mornin', marm," Uncle Lisha gave greeting, as he rapped on the casing of the open door.

Miss Skinner responded rather coldly, looking curiously at the elderly visitor, and glancing at his small companion with a tightening of her thin lips.

"We got took humsick sudden, so we cut stick for hum, but we 're shamed on't naow, an' begs pardon, marm, an' won't du so agin." Uncle Lisha pushed Sammy gently before him, and made it plain to Miss Skinner in pantomime that he did not intend the apology to include himself.

"He was a very naughty boy," she remarked, with severity.

"Yes, marm," Uncle Lisha cheerfully admitted, "but it 's the fust time we ever went tu school, an' everything 's kinder odd an' mismated, which it bein' the case an' aour age bein' only seben, goin' on eight, we 're a-hopesin' you won't pinch aour toes tew hard a-gittin' broke in, but kinder give the luther a chance tu stretch gradwel."

Miss Skinner uttered a noncommittal "M-m—m," and asked, "Be you the child's payrent or guardeen?" She taught grammar to her more advanced pupils, but otherwise had little use for it.

"Wal, no, marm, not nary one. Me an' my ol' womern lives tu his father's, an' I shoemake for a livin'. My name is Lisher Paiggs, an' if you was a-wantin' any leetle job o' tappin' or patchin' done, I 'd be more 'n praoud tu du it free-gratis-for-nothin', seein' you 're aour schoolmarm."

A keen, professional first glance had shown him that Miss Skinner's footgear was in need of repair, and that frugality was one of her traits.

"Thank you, Mr. Peggs," she said, in a softer tone, "I was a-considerin' his youth,

and don't want to punish him too severe, but at the same time the' 'd be an end of all discipline if such breakin' of rules wa'n't punished some."

"Sartinly, marm. We wa'n't expectin' not tu git punished some, but if you could git a tol'able fit wi' suthin' besides whippin', we 'd be turrible 'bleeged tu ye, marm."

"Timothy Samuel," said she, in a judicial tone, after some consideration, "you 'll take your spellin' book an' stand in the middle of the floor and study your lesson diligent twenty minutes, and you 're tu stay in when the boys go aout."

With the delivery of the sentence she placed the book in his passive hand, and with the ferule indicated the place where he was to stand, but his feet seemed powerless to move to place him there. How could he ever stand there alone for all those long minutes, to be stared at by so many eyes!

"Come, sir!" Miss Skinner commanded sharply. "Sulkin' won't help you a mite."

"Beg your pardon, marm, it hain't that; it 's 'cause we 're bashf'l," said Uncle Lisha, and with that took Sammy's hand and led

him to the centre of the room, where, stooping beside him, his big waxy forefinger sticking on the page as it went slowly down the column, he helped him go through his lesson.

"C-a-t—cat!" he spelled in a gusty whisper, louder than the buzzing of a bumblebee in the window, and then explained, "jest any cat, Polly's an' the ol' cat, an' ol' Tom, an' the hul bilin'. Bom bye you 'll come tu kitten, an' it 's harder, for all it 's a leetle cat. D-o-g—dog, not aour Drive in partic'lar, nor a haoun' dawg, but any sort on 'em, an' there you be agin; a leetle dog 's harder tu spell 'an a big one. Cur'ous, hain't it? Oh, I tell ye what, l'arnin' is mighty interestin'."

If a scholar dared to giggle openly he was glowered upon so savagely that he was awed to silence, and kept his eyes thereafter riveted as fixedly on his book as the culprit on his. Thus the old man lightened Sammy's punishment, and at the same time made the others apply themselves more closely. When the little boy was permitted to take his seat Uncle Lisha got his stout, short legs in alongside, and sat with him through the remaining

study hours and the boisterous jolly recess of the boys. During that quarter hour of indoor quiet they studied the hieroglyphics of the desk and found among them Sam Lovel's initials carved by his own hand fifteen years before, and Joseph Hill's name in full, bearing an earlier date, and in evidence of his characteristic indecision, the foot of one "1" being turned to the right, the other to the left. "Solon Briggs, Annuis Dominos 1820," whereat Uncle Lisha racked his brain to recall to mind a Danvis girl bearing the latter name. Sammy missed scarcely a word of his spelling lesson, and when fortified at noon by a generous luncheon felt brave enough to undertake going through the afternoon alone. So, bidding him good-by and to be a good boy, and reminding Miss Skinner to send her shoes over to him next day, Uncle Lisha trudged home in time for a late dinner with the plausible excuse that "he hed be'n on a taower for his health."

The summer of school that on its first day Sammy looked forward upon as an interminable season of torture proved not nearly so bad in actual experience. He was not an

ambitious scholar; the study of his lessons was an irksome task, from which his thoughts would always be wandering out to the blue sky, the green woods, and the flashing brooks.

Miss Almira Skinner was a strict disciplinarian, who seldom spared the rod and laid it on with no gentle hand. Once caught by her at their monkey tricks the Bissette children never repeated them. Sammy was not in danger of dying young through being too good, but merely a rough, noisy, mischievous boy, apt to play naughty pranks, yet too honest to escape punishment by lying. Once he achieved a triumph of invention in contriving to hold a long thorn between his naked first and second toes, so that he could secretly prod the boy who sat in front of him. The first — and last — was eminently successful; it brought forth a yell from the surprised victim that started the whole school. Suspicion at once fell on Sammy. Miss Skinner charged him with the crime, and when he would not deny it, she sent him out for a rod suitable for his chastisement. As he carefully searched the grove behind the schoolhouse, a smooth-barked white birch

caught his eye, and inspired him with a happy thought. On the instant he whipped out his jackknife and peeled off a sheet from the trunk, which was about the same diameter as his body and as long as from his neck to his hips. He made a pair of armholes in the upper part, slipped off coat and vest and put on this primitive armor next his shirt. He had barely time to replace his clothing, when the impatient beat of the ferule summoned him to return. Hastily cutting the first stout switch at hand, and trimming it as he ran, he presented himself for punishment.

"Was you waitin' for a switch tu grow?" Miss Skinner demanded, with sharp sarcasm.

"No, marm," he answered meekly.

"Well, if you was all this time a-looking for one you might have faound a better, I should think," she said, examining and testing the stick with critical eye and hand.

"They 're 'most all used up, I guess, marm," Sammy ventured to suggest.

"We 'll see 't this one is," said she, and began to lay on lustily.

Sammy feigned the keenest suffering,

writhing and howling so that when Miss Skinner desisted from sheer exhaustion, she felt that she had never administered punishment with more satisfaction to herself, while if she could have but known it, her victim as fully shared her feeling. He hid his armor in a convenient hollow stump, and it served him again on more than one occasion.

Winter brought good Mr. Mumpson to preside over a larger school, and it brought the robust outdoor sports of snowballing, sliding, and skating that made the fifteen minutes of recess impatiently waited for, and the nooning an hour of concentrated delight, when the happy owners of skates rushed whooping to the nearest ice patch; others slid down hill on their home-made sleds, with runners sawn from natural crooks and beams fastened to them with wooden pins, or simpler sleds with board runners and jumpers made of barrel staves. Another rabble of yelling young savages assailed a fort of snow, defended by as noisy a band of warriors. The master was now with one company, now with another, each proud to have him with it for the prestige he gave, and the plucky

spirit that dwelt in so weak a body. Then there were the Saturday half-holidays that seemed long enough to do anything, almost everything, in, though they never did prove quite sufficient.

If Sammy could spend this half day with his bosom friend Joseph Hill's youngest son, Ben, he was satisfied. The next best use of it was to visit with Uncle Lisha, listening to tales of his adventures, his memorable Plattsburgh campaign, his journey to the far West. Most interesting, perhaps, to the boy was to compare their school experiences.

Uncle Lisha's schoolhouse was built of logs, with a wide stone fireplace that made a great show of warming the big room, while the pupils in the far corners were half frozen, the water pail quite so, and there was a continual clamor of appeal, "May I go t' the fire?" Youngsters of Sammy's years were seated on rough slab benches, without desks, and their short legs sought in vain to reach the floor. Sammy counted himself fortunate in living in more luxurious times, though missing the thrilling experience of crossing wolf tracks on his way to school.

Though he continued to be an unambitious scholar when he came to study, and heartily hated arithmetic, he liked geography a little better and history quite well for the stories, and going to school grew less irksome as term after term went by without bringing back Miss Skinner.

After two or three years Polly began going, and the renewal of their constant companionship was a great joy to both. What happy loitering along the road in pleasant weather, watching the minnows flashing like silver arrows shot into the black shadows of the bridge, or noting the coming of the swallows, and a little later the bobolinks, both faithful to date almost to a day, or in roadside fields they hunted for nests, just to know where they were, — they rarely did know where those of bobolink and meadow-lark were cunningly hid. There were flowers in plenty ; great tufts of blue violets ready to be picked by handfuls, only to be beheaded by scores, by these sanguinary little gamesters, who would "fight roosters" till they were conscience-smitten to behold the heaps of slain. After all, they were no crueler than

botanists. Then there was the triumph of finding the first ripe strawberry; then of stringing a herdsgrass stalk full of them for the schoolma'am, if on the way to school, for mother or Aunt Jerusha, if homeward bound; and later, gathering a basketful for supper. At noon they had a daily picnic by the brookside over the tin pail of luncheon, yet did not long tarry over it, for there was a deal of playing to be done in that hour.

In winter they were as close comrades. Sammy's sled hauled the easier and slid down hill the faster when chubby little sister was on board. Without recognizing it, he felt a sort of heroism in shielding her from the fierce pelting of the snowstorm, or in carrying her across the brook running a flood in a January thaw. After the killing of the lynx he was quite in danger of believing himself a hero indeed.

Sammy had a little sweetheart, as all boys do, though they never, never tell their love in words, even to the object of their affections. His sweetheart was next to the youngest of Joseph Hill's daughters, the only dark-haired, dark-eyed one of the brood, and pretty enough

to steal the heart of any discriminating boy. He divided with her the big red Seek-no-further that was part of his noon dessert. Polly had one to herself; he puzzled his unmathematical brain over her sums more than his own, and gave her a place on his sled between Polly and himself, when her brothers, who had contempt for girls in general and sisters in particular, begrudged her a seat on theirs; he brought her handfuls of Dutchman's breeches and honeysuckles, and great green and white sheaves of moose flowers, and as a mark of special trust he showed her the rarest bird's nests he found, and saved for her the choicest amber-hued gum that he climbed the spruces to gather. There was a tacit understanding that when they were all grown up she and Sammy and Sis were to live together somewhere, when Sammy and Ben, who were to be the nearest neighbors, would do nothing but hunt, trap, or fish, while the women kept house, an arrangement quite satisfactory to all.

Alas, that it must be told. Sammy was fickle, and one summer made an Indian gift of his heart and bestowed it upon a tall,

willowy, pink-and-white schoolmistress, ten years his senior. For her now were the flowers, the handfuls of strawberries, the raspberries gathered out of the thorny thickets of fence corners, and amber jewels of the spruce; and as they walked to and from school while she boarded at Sam's, she squeezed his hand in hers, strong and long, yet very smooth, and he cast loving sheep's eyes up under his hat brim at her smiling pink face.

One Saturday forenoon a chipper young fellow came driving to the schoolhouse in a spick and span new buggy, and Sammy's heart was righteously torn with jealousy when he saw her feed this odious fop with berries he had given her that very morning, and the pair wagging their jaws in unison over the gum that was meant for no lips but hers. At noon they drove away together, and the poor boy spent the wretchedest of half-holidays. Sunday was no better, but on Monday the enchantress returned and beguiled him again with her smiles. In the fall when school was ended the spell was broken, for it came out that the pretty school-

ma'am was to be married, and had been teaching to get her wedding finery. Sammy thirsted for the blood of that little fop, and was sure for a week that he could never be happy again, and was glad to have the family take notice that his appetite was poor, until Aunt Jerusha suggested "popple bark bitters." The winter school begun, he found himself fonder of little M'ri', and mortally afraid that she would pay him as he deserved for his faithlessness, but his treatment had not changed her faithful, loving heart one jot. She behaved just as if nothing had happened, and their life flowed on again in the old course.

CHAPTER XIV

THE FIRST FOX-HUNT

It was November, and young Drive had taken to the serious duties of life with a conviction that there was more satisfaction in pleasant and profitable duties than in mischievous pranks. If he robbed a hen's nest or worried a cat, or, worst of all, gave the sheep a frightened scamper through the pasture, the best he got from it was a brief tickle of the palate, and the wild joy of a forbidden prank; the most and longest enduring, a chastisement that made his muscles quiver. If he hunted diligently, even though he ran counter in the excess of his zeal, he was set right and praised for his good work, and it was a delight to him to hear the music of his own voice coming back in the echoes, and greatest joy of all when the boom of the gun came to his ears, and he made short cuts along the track to find a dead fox lying at

his master's feet, reeking that ecstatic odor he had followed so many hours through swamp and over ledge, now hot, now cold and faint. Sam was quite satisfied that judicious training and experience only were needed to make the young dog a worthy successor to his renowned progenitor.

Having killed four foxes before Drive, and believing Sammy to have had experience enough to give a reasonable chance of escaping fox ague, he thrilled the boy's heart with the announcement one evening that he was to start with him bright and early in the morning on a fox-hunt. The honor of promotion to the rank and dignity of a real fox-hunter was almost too great to carry. He put on mighty airs when Sis asked him to bring her home a nice partridge tail next day for a fan and some spruce cones for a work-box, and said: "We don't waste fox charges on pa'tridges, nor go poking 'raound arter such nonsense when we 're a-fox-hunting. We hafter 'tend right tu business!"

He went into the shop, where there happened to be no visitors, and asked Uncle

Lisha if his sandstone would put a good edge on a knife to skin a fox.

"Ruther rank, I guess," the old man replied, and added, with a twinkle of the eyes that was not entirely pleasant to Sammy, "but I should n't wonder if 't would answer your turn."

But Sammy, pretending to ignore the implied doubt, asked, "Say, Uncle Lisher, haow du you skin a fox?"

"Wal, gen'ally, the fust thing is tu git it killed," and then seeing that this light tone was hurting his little friend, Uncle Lisha put on a sober face and went on. "Wal, Bub, I never hed no gre't exper'ence; I was eyther a not gettin' shots or a-missin' on 'em, so 't when I killed a fox 't was sech a job tu skin him 'at I useter wish I could eyther kill enough tu l'arn haow or nary a one. Your father 'll skin one quicker 'n you can git off a wet shirt. You want tu rip 'em from the heels o' one hind foot tu t'other, then skin 'em aout, an' the tail, an' then it 's nothin' but strippin' till you git tu the fore laigs an' the head. Then you got tu ta' keer, skinnin' the eyes an' maouth an' cuttin' off the ears.

But don't you worry. Mebby you won't be bothered no gre't."

Sammy listened attentively, while he sharpened his knife to a feather-edge, then shut it with a defiant click, thinking how he would disappoint the doubters, and marched away to bed. To bed, but not to sleep, for often he raised his head to listen if the kitchen stove were making prophecy of a windy morning, or to look out the dormer window to see if a rain cloud was beginning to quench the innumerable twinkling lamps of the sky. But they shone brightly when the last embers of the fire snapped out, and the household sounds dropped one by one into the silence of the night, till only the regular long-drawn blasts of Uncle Lisha's trumpet and the scampering of the mice remained of them, and in the wide outer world only the quavering voice of a solitary little owl was heard.

The next sound he heard was his father's footsteps on the steep stairs and his voice guardedly calling him to get up. Opening his sleepy eyes, he saw the great patch of candlelight widening and brightening on the sloping ceiling. Then he knew it was the morn-

ing of the much-wished-for day come too soon, and wondered, as he remembered last night's impatience for its coming, how it could be so.

The stove was roaring and crackling merrily, diffusing a comforting warmth, and out of the oven doors came the delicate aroma of baking potatoes. It looked very funny to the boy, as he sat watching his father through sleepy eyes, to see him getting breakfast, quite handily for a man, yet not with the adroitness of a woman, tiptoeing between stove and table, and making many journeys to cupboard and pantry for things forgotten, and Drive getting often under foot in the double excitement of prospective early breakfast and a day's hunting. It was odd for Sammy to be eating breakfast with no one but his father, — a good breakfast, but with a different savor from those of his mother's getting, — and it was strange to be out of doors at this unwonted hour, with everything unfamiliar in the dim light, — the fields all white with hoarfrost, the woods a gray blur, the neighbors' houses vague blots in the landscape, and with their smokeless chimneys apparently as lifeless as the dun cones of

haystacks. It was such a silent world, too, they were in the midst of, voiceless but for crowing of cocks challenging and answering from farmstead to farmstead, the far-off barking of a house dog, and the great hammer of the sleepless forge shaking the air with its muffled throb. It was as if the man and boy and hound had the world to themselves. Sammy's legs flew fast to keep up with his father's long, swinging stride, while the hound, now seen, now only heard rustling through the crisp grass, quartered the ground before them, showing form and color more as daylight grew, and the little stars faded out and the planets paled in the brightening sky. Now he suddenly checked his loping gallop, sniffed the frosty grass eagerly, and whimpered his suppressed ecstasy until at last it burst forth in a long-drawn melodious challenge that presently came back as clear and sweet, in fainter repetition, from every hill and woodside. It struck an answering chord in the boy's soul that choked him and brought tears to his eyes. He was more ashamed of this emotion than he would have been could he have known to what a degree the tall,

bearded man shared it. The bugle notes came faster, as Drive worked the trail foot by foot steadily, but, to Sam's surprise, away from the nearest woodland.

"Sure you 're right, be ye, dawg?" he said, following the trail with his eye far into the field, where it seamed the silver sward, and back to where it crossed the muddy swale, and found, as he expected, an imprint of the fox's pad with the nail marks pointing toward the nearest cover. He called the hound to it, pointed it out, and indicated the right direction with a wave of the hand. Drive dibbled it an instant with his nose, looked as long in the direction his master pointed, then up into his face, asking as plainly with soft brown eyes as words could have spoken, "Du you mean it, or be you foolin'?"

"It 's all right, boy; pick it up an' go ahead!" said Sam, giving the black-and-tan head an endearing and admiring pat, and the dog went joyfully onward with an assured confident note in his mellow bugle blasts.

"Oh, I tell ye, Bub, he 's a-goin' tu make jest as good a haoun' as ever run!" cried

Sam. "He 's got sense. Naow, pull foot lively, for I cal'late he 'll hev up his fox 'baout 's soon as he strikes Joel's woods."

They hurried on to a runway, where Sam placed his boy, and giving him a few brief instructions, went on to another. The valley was well aroused now from its sleepy silence; every house dog within a mile joined his querulous voice and its score of echoes to the general clamor; a cowboy began shouting lustily to his herd; a cowbell jangled in response, and a bull bellowed sudden protest; a flock of frightened sheep bleated in a harsh, discordant tremolo; a charcoal wagon began its empty, rumbling journey to the pits; and when half a dozen red squirrels set up a snickering and jeering, and a flock of jays began squalling, it seemed to Sammy as if there was a general conspiracy of noises to drown the only melodious voice among them. The challenge of the hound grew faint; it could scarcely be made out in what direction; then it was quite lost; then after a while came faintly into hearing; or was it the clang of the cowbell or the tinkle of the brook? No, it was Drive's own clear note, unmis-

takable, now drawing near, nearer, right on toward Sammy's runway. What if he should come, and the heart beating ready to choke him, and hand shaking like a poplar leaf? He knew he must miss the fox if he got a shot, and wished the animal might sheer off just out of range and save him from this disgrace. Now he heard the rustle of the leaves under Reynard's soft pads nearer and nearer, now halting an instant to listen, now coming on again as Drive's bugle notes broke forth afresh. There was a flash of tawny red against the dull brown leaves. Then appearing so suddenly that it seemed to materialize from thin air, a ruddy form stood like a statue on a gray rock before him, looking backward with pricked ears toward the oncoming hound. Sammy saw only that, nor thought where his gun pointed, nor how the muzzle wavered; there was no missing such a mark. He pulled the trigger desperately, the form vanished behind the rock, and vanished utterly, for when he ran to it and peered over it there was nothing there but dead brown leaves and a low tangle of huckleberry bushes. The boy's heart sank, leaving a

sickening void in its place, and the conviction forced itself upon him that he had missed so fair a mark, and could find no excuse for having done so. Drive came to him, sniffed the bare rock and bushes eagerly; then turned a look of inquiry, disappointment, and reproach in his young master's face, puzzled an instant over the broken trail, and went on with no abatement of zeal. Sammy searched the ground, the rocks, and the trees for a tuft of fur, or a drop of blood or a shot mark, without success, and then he heard his father coming, and prepared to face the hardest trial of all.

"Wal, Sammy, boy, did n't quite fetch him that time, eh?" his father asked, breathing hard from rapid walking, and wearing the best-natured of smiles, yet looking as if a laugh might be lurking behind it.

"No, not quite, I guess," Sammy answered, turning hot and cold under a continual blush. "An' he was stan'in' right on this 'ere rock, an' I p'inted right straight at him, an' it did n't seem as if I could miss him!"

"Yes, I know," his father said. "You can't al'ays kill 'em, — the' don't nobody.

Mebby your gun hung fire half a jiffy, an' mebby you aimed at the hul fox. Did ye, think?"

Sammy did not think the gun had hung fire, nor could he recall that he had held on any particular part of the great red mark, so big that it seemed impossible for a charge of shot to miss.

"I thought like 'nough," his father said. "Older hands 'an you be makes that mistake. I hev, more 'n oncte. Naow, next chance you git you aim at the critter's head or his heart. This time, seein' 'at he was side on, you 'd ortu p'inted jest behind his fore shoulder."

"Du you think I did n't tech him, daddy?"

"Could n't say sartin, but you made the fur fly in a bunch as fast as four spry feet could carry it."

He did not tell him that some tall branches of witch-hazel were lopped by fresh jagged cuts, while the boy's heart was full of gratitude that he could not express to his kind censor.

"He 's a young fox, for he hain't scairt off the hill for once shootin' at," Sam said,

after listening to Drive's regular baying as the fox circled before him. "Mebby we 'll git another crack at him."

He led the way to the southern end of the hill, and placing the boy on a runway, chose another near by for himself. Sammy over and over again hoped the game would give his runway a wide berth, yet stood motionless as a statue, with his carefully loaded gun at a ready, and craned his neck for a first glimpse of the fox. Now a red squirrel, flashing along a fallen trunk, set his heart into a wild flutter, and again the noisy scurry of a chipmunk in the dry leaves. A boisterous mob of jays was coming toward him by short flights, now so near that he caught the glint of blue plumage through the haze of branches; and now he heard Drive crashing through dry brush and was sure he heard lighter footfalls, all coming steadily toward him. He put the gun to his shoulder, his cheek almost touching the stock. Then the jays all at once veered off at a right angle, and the light rustle of the leaves was heard going in the same direction as Drive's crashing progress and eager, melodious challenge.

So they receded for a minute or more, and then came the roar of Sam's gun, the frightened jays flew squalling out of hearing, the hound ceased his music, and a sudden silence succeeded. The smoke of Sam's gun was still drifting upward and among the branches, and dissolving in the hazy air, when his boy came to where he stood, looking marvelously cool for one who had just performed so great a feat. There lay the fox, his sleek fur frowzy from the shaking that had been the reward of the hound, who was lying hard by, diligently licking his chase-worn feet. Sam having reloaded his gun, set it against a tree, and proceeded to initiate his son into the art and mystery of skinning a fox.

"It 's a good thing tu l'arn tu du afore you 've killed one," he said.

Sammy was proud to play a part in it by pulling manfully at the legs during the operation of stripping. When the head was reached it gave proof in the skull, broken and punctured by several BB shot, that Sam practiced his preaching, and aimed at a particular part.

"Not ezactly, nuther," he explained to the

boy, "for I p'inted a leetle ahead of his nose, 'cause he was jest a-hyperin'. Guess he got your wind."

He turned the handsome pelt fur-side out, rolled it up and thrust it in his coat pocket, leaving the brush hanging conspicuously out, a bit of vanity of which most fox-hunters are guilty, and Sammy trudged on that side, gloating over the trophy with curious eyes, and wishing most fervently that he were entitled to wear it. So, with Drive as eager as ever for a fresh trail, they ranged the woods till noon without finding any, and then took their way homeward. Sammy felt free now to shoot the head off a partridge that flushed by the hound alighted in a tree before them, and also to gather a pocketful of the prettiest cones for the little sister.

Sammy stretched himself at full length on the pile of leather in the shop, and rested his tired legs while he made open confession of his blunders to Uncle Lisha.

"Daddy says I did n't aim nowhere, an' I s'pose it 's so. It don't seem as if a feller could miss such a great big mark if he shot anywhere."

"But you faound aout you could," said the old man, unable to forego a little good-natured banter. "An' sharpened up your knife for nothin'!"

"But the aidge 'll keep till I go again, an' I'll git one, yet, you see if I don't!" said the boy, with more confidence than he felt.

When Antoine came in with other frequenters of the place, he, too, had heard by some remarkable means of Sammy's misadventure, and scoffed loudly at it.

"Ho! Che, boy, what for de reason if you could pull you gawn hard 'nough for keel un loupcervier, you can' pull him hard 'nough for keel de fox, hein? Ah 'll believed you can' never keel somet'ing, honly dat loupcervier, an' dat was jes' happen. You bes' was give me you gawn, den he keel somet'ing ev'ry tam!"

"'Pears as if I remembered me an' you shootin' int' the thick o' a big flock o' ducks daown t' the East Slang," said Sam, coming to the boy's relief. "An' nary one on us cut a feather. If growed-up men can miss a flock as big as a hoss shed, we hed n't ortu

be tew rough on a boy's missin' his fust fox."

Sammy nestled beside his father, with his head upon his knee, and Antoine, in great confusion, became deeply absorbed in cleaning his pipe.

"You see if that 'ere fox had be'n a foot more one way or t'other, an' Bub hed p'inted two inches forward or back, he 'd 'a' got the critter," said Joe.

CHAPTER XV

TRAPPING

SAMMY was very confident of retrieving his fortune, but he ranged the hunting ground faithfully without the luck of finding a fox. It seemed as if there must have been a general exodus of foxes from Danvis. The few trails found were so cold that at best they drew only a reluctant challenge from the keenest-nosed hound, and at last faded out to a doubtful suspicion of a scent. Experienced hunters attributed these cold, infrequent trails to a wise old vixen, who for many years escaped guns and insidious traps to rear her yearly litter on Hedge Hog Hill, and taught her cubs much of the cunning she had learned in a long life. She was a plague to poultry wives, of which they were powerless to rid themselves, as the fox-hunters had no mind to do so long as she provided foxes for their sport. It became

an unwritten law of the old hunters to let her go by if ever they got a shot at her ; and she was too cunning to be in much danger from the young fellows.

Poor Sammy grew more and more discouraged with following Drive up hill and down dale to the slow music of his infrequent bugle notes until they ended in a final long-drawn announcement of failure. If a fox was got up, the chase led far away into the fastnesses of the mountains. His father told him that there was no use in hunting any more until the first snows fell, when the foxes would probably return from their migration. But Sammy was so nettled by Antoine's continual scoffs that he was determined to get a fox by hook or by crook, and as a last resort set a trap, as what country boy has not? He knew it was a practice held in utter detestation by all honest fox-hunters, and by none more than by his father. The temptation was great, and success seemed certain. He would catch but one, just to end the everlasting poking fun at him. No one would ever know how he got it. He easily possessed himself of one of his father's raccoon traps

and set about ridding it of the scent of iron which every one said, except those who knew, was what a wise fox most feared.

He smoked it thoroughly in the pungent reek of green hemlock, and then proceeded to make a proper bed for its reception. First, he removed the sod and earth from a carefully chosen knoll, two feet in diameter and eight inches deep, and filled the hollow with buckwheat, and carefully set the trap, with a wooden clog attached, in the lowest part of the bed. When all was completed it looked to him a very unsuspicious arrangement. Over all he sprinkled a liberal bait of toasted cheese rinds. He made a gingerly retreat from the precincts with an assurance of success, somewhat dampened, it is true, by a twinge of shame at using such underhand means to circumvent a fox. Sammy paid his first visit to the trap in considerable excitement, wondering in what condition he should find it, yet almost sure it would not be quite undisturbed, so skillfully was it hidden and so temptingly baited. But not a morsel of the bait was touched.

"Did n't none happen tu come nigh, last

night, but tu-night they will, you 'll see," he said; and one at least did, for when Sammy approached the place, treading cautiously on tiptoe and craning his neck, he saw the trap lying sprung and quite naked among the chaff, and conspicuously displayed on top of it the most contemptuous token of Reynard's visit that could be given. In deep resentment of the insult, Sammy set the trap with redoubled care and baited it with the choicest tidbits, but all to no purpose, save the uncovering of the trap and a clean sweep of the bait. Now his trapping came to an unexpected end. Drive followed him at some little distance behind until, as he was making an unseen, careful retreat from the bed, he cast a backward glance at it, when, to his horror, he saw the hound making a curious examination of this odd arrangement. He had only time to call out a sharp command before the hound poked a tentative paw into the chaff, sprung the trap upon it, and thereupon set up a howl of pain and astonishment, followed by another and another, all loud enough to be heard a mile away. Then he made for home as fast as the clog

would let him, until Sammy overhauled him, as frightened as he, got a foot on the spring, and set him free. But the hound continued the dolorous outcry as he hobbled homeward, now and then stopping to examine his pinched foot. Sammy followed hard on his heels till the orchard wall was reached, from behind which now suddenly appeared, most unwelcome of possible apparitions, the tall form of Sam Lovel, his face expressing a droll mingling of vexation and amusement.

"What on airth is the matter wi' the dog?" he said, as he stooped to examine the hurt foot, while Sammy stood aloof, down-headed and shamefaced, with the trap dangling from his hand and wishing it a thousand miles away.

"I — I — kinder guess he — guess he got intu a trap," was the abashed reply.

"I wonder who ever sot traps raound here."

"I — I — guess I done it," Sammy stammered, dreading open confession, though he well knew that in it alone was peace of mind.

"I should n't scarcely ha' thought aour Bub would be tryin' tu ketch foxes, — sech a

mean, sneakin' sort o' business, 'specierly for a feller 'at 's got him a good dawg an' good gun. Why, I 'm act'ally 'shamed on him!"

So Sammy wanted to say for himself, but his quivering lips would not shape the words, and he blubbered a blundering apology instead.

"They was a-laughin' at me — an' I thought I 'd git one — an' — an' make 'em b'lieve I shot it an' they 'd stop the' noise — an' then I would n't ketch no more — an' I would n't only one."

"No, so ye would n't, Bub," said his father, with something of pity in his voice, "nor the fust one nuther. Boys al'ays thinks they can, but they don't never" —

"But I did — 'most!" Sammy asserted with some spirit.

"Yes, the fox clawed aout the trap an' sprung it, an' eat up all the bait, an' jes' so he kep' a-doin'," said his father, "an' that 's as nigh as boys — an' most men — gits, an' never knowin' what the trouble is."

"If they can't ketch 'em, I don't see what hurt the' is in tryin'," Sammy ventured to argue.

"'Cause it 's showin' a mean dispersition, a-tryin' tu steal other folkses' fun," his father answered; "an' they be mean, them 'at does. Look a' ol' Ike Hamner, sneakin' aout airly in October an' ketchin' hul litters 'fore they 're half prime, an' sp'ilin' lots o' fun for us, — for the' be some 'at knows haow," Sam hastened in confusion to amend the inconsistency of his assertions. "But the' hain't no boys, a-touchin' trap an' bait an' all as car'less as if they was settin' skunk traps. You can't never shoot one? 'Shaw, yes, ye can tew. I did n't kill the fust one I shot at, an' don't al'ays naow. Can't git no shots? Why, the' al'ays comes sech spells when the' hain't none 'raound, but the' 's some ol' varmints, 'at starts for Ne' Hampshir' the fust hoot a haoun' gives. You 'll git your chance tu rights, but if ye don't, don't never set no fox-traps. Jes' see haow nigh you come tu sp'ilin' Drive's foot! S'posin' he 'd got ketched way off aouten hearin', an' the dog got hung! He 'd tore his foot half off a-tryin' tu git loose, an' would n't be'n no good for tew months."

"Oh, I never thought o' that, daddy, till

jest as I see Drive a-pokin' int' the trap," Sammy managed to say between catches of the voice, begotten of various emotions, to one of which he gave vigorous expression by pitching the trap against the wall.

"Wal, the' hain't no gre't harm done, an' I ruther guess Bub won't set no more fox-traps," Sam said, without appearing to notice the act, and the boy's renunciation could not have been more assured by plighted word.

His father picked up the trap carelessly, and the pair walked home together, the younger, at least, in great peace of mind.

It was early in December when signs of the long-expected first snow began to show in the gradual misty fading of the blue sky until the rays of the sun grew pale and short, as it waned toward the west, becoming a faint, blurred patch, giving no apparent warmth nor light; and when it was gone, no one knew whether it was sundown but by the almanac.

Every newcomer to the shop in turn prophesied snow, until at last, when Uncle Lisha looked where the invisible witches were drinking tea around the glowing counterfeit

of the red stove draft under the old apple tree, he spied an unusual whiteness gathering in the corners of the dusty, cobwebbed panes, and forthwith propounded a time-honored riddle, which, like all its class, could be guessed only by those who already knew it.

"Raoun' the haouse an' raoun' the haouse, an' leave a white glove in the winder."

Every one promptly answered, "Snow!"

"Right you be," Uncle Lisha made concession, and some one opened the outer door and verified it by showing the cold, white sparks wavering downward in the candlelight athwart the dusky patch of night.

Sammy was all ears when Joseph Hill remarked in an inquiring way, "Wal, Samuel, you 'll 'most hafter kinder give 'em a try in the mornin', if it don't blow like Sam Hill or suthin'?"

"No, I can't go tu-morrer," Sam sighed. "I got some fixin' up for winter, jest as I al'ays hev when the fust snow comes. Sammy can go, though, if he wants to."

With this comforting assurance, the boy curled up in his favorite lair on the leather, and finding little to interest him in the poli-

tics into which his elders presently fell, beset Uncle Lisha in whispers to "tell some more riddles." This his old friend was nothing loath to do, as it would not hinder his listening to propound the unguessable questions nor give the time-worn answers. So he began with "Niddy, noddy, tew heads an' one body;" and when he thought Sammy had given it enough unavailing study, supplied the answer, "A barrel," without distracting his own attention. Then, as he kept one ear attentively cocked to a criticism of the "S'lec'men's duin's," he delivered aside, —

> "Chic, Chic, Cherry, O,
> All the men in Derry, O,
> Can't climb Chic, Cherry, O,"

and in due time announced that "Chic, Cherry, O" was no more nor less than smoke. This reminded him of his pipe, which he sorted from among his tools beside him and began filling, while he propounded several other brain-racking riddles such as,

> "Nitty crout,
> Netty crout,
> Wears a white petticrout
> And a red nose;
> The longer she lives the shorter she grows,"

which Sammy could not guess, though it was the candle before his eyes. Then followed,

"Hill full,
A hole full,
You can't ketch a bowl full;"

"Over the water,
Under the water,
Never teched the water,"

and that masterpiece of poetry and mystery,

"Chink, chink,
Through the brook,
And never stops to drink,"

the solution of which was a chain dragged through a brook by oxen. When Uncle Lisha's stock was exhausted he suggested to Sammy the wisdom of going to bed so that he might be up betimes. "It 's the airly bird 'at gits the worm, you know; an' I 've heard your father say time an' agin, 'An haour 'fore sun-up 's wuth tew arter,' an' I allers noticed he 'd git up airlier tu go huntin' 'an anything else. The snow 'll kiver the shack [1] on the beech ridges, an' mebby send the fox daown inter the open arter mice, so like 'nough you 'll start one. Hope so. Good-night."

[1] Acorns and beechnuts.

After a brave struggle Sammy overcame his boy's dislike of going to bed, and slowly drifted into dreamland, while he committed the riddles to memory for future use at school, and listened anxiously for signs of rising wind that might come to spoil to-morrow's sport. There was no warning sough of chimneys, nor soft swish of flakes against the panes, — only the slide and slump of an overladen branch's burden upon the roof.

CHAPTER XVI

FOX LIFE

When the boy awoke the snowfall was over and the earth asleep under its new unruffled white covering, beneath a sky of breaking clouds and widening patches of blue, where stars faded in the growing day.

The kitchen was aglow with warmth and light, and Uncle Lisha was tiptoeing about it in his stockings, in anxious quest of some article indispensable to the breakfast his unwonted hands were getting.

"Good airth an' seas!" he whispered, in a blast that drove the candle flame aslant, "what on airth does the women folks du wi' ev'thing? I 'd livser make a pair o' boots 'an tu git a meal o' victuals arter 'em! Guess I 'll hafter raout aout Jerushy jest tu find the pepper box!"

But she had already heard him, and came from the bedroom hurriedly, fumbling with

pins whose use was uncomprehended by the masculine mind.

"Why, father, what be you a-tryin' tu du?" she asked in wonder at the old man's strange occupation.

"A-gettin' Bub some breakfus', that's what," he answered testily.

"What, for this precious child? Then why on airth didn't you call me?" she demanded, resentful of such usurpation of her rights. "Or'nary men folks don't 'pear tu hev much knack o' gittin' breakfus'." Then, relenting, she hastened to concede, "But this 'ere warmed-up 'tater does look proper good, father."

Between them, the boy was provided with a nice hot breakfast, as the hound was with one as much to his liking, and the two went forth to the snowy world. Familiar objects looked strange, their angles rounded in their spotless new guise, but woodpile, unhoused cart, the tenantless hencoops, and the scraggy apple trees soon assumed recognizable shapes. A track showed far away on the even whiteness of the fields, and as Sammy looked beyond the dotted blue line

that the hound was printing he saw a daintier one tending toward Hedge Hog Hill, the old vixen's, no doubt, which he thought, in vexation of spirit, could only lead to failure. Then he remembered how, when she led away into the hills, she had always a trick of mounting two cross-walls and going back and forth on them, and giving the hounds a tangle that usually ended the day's pursuit of her. Now Sammy bethought him that if he could but get there before her and ambush himself, the long-desired shot might be obtained.

He was not in the secret of the old hunters, who would be loath indeed to have their poultry-breeding women folk know how carefully they spared the arch raider of flocks, — he only thought it the greater glory to circumvent her cunning. So, when Drive announced the warmth of the scent with a loud and jubilant note, he made all haste toward the place. Assured that he was keeping to the leeward, he had the satisfaction of knowing by the voice of the hound that the fox was still veering away diagonally, and so giving him more time to reach the cross-wall first. Now he came to the foot of the long,

rough slope, down which one of the walls ran. He climbed over it, and began the slippery ascent, — and how steep and long and slippery it was, as he stooped low and slipped and tumbled along with his last breath almost spent. It seemed as if he never should get his breath again, nor quiet the beating of his heart, so that he could hear the voice of the hound, till he was close upon him. But, in spite of the hammering of his heart, even now he heard in the distance the swelling and falling cadence of Drive's tuneful voice regularly drawing nearer, and now he lifted his head cautiously above the snow-capped wall, and acre by acre scanned the broad fields. The expanse of even whiteness was taking on light and shade and color now. The growing dawn flushed the broken clouds with salmon tint; the edges bordered the blue sky with nacreous hues. The snow ridges were flushed with the repeated colors, while the hollows were lined with blue. Then away where the bugle-like notes were sounding, Sammy descried a dark speck moving across a ridge, and then it disappeared in a hollow, and the

music grew fainter. A smaller speck came into view on a nearer crest, and that he knew was the fox, now circling on the half-naked ground under a group of tent-like evergreens, now taking a fence top, yet surely drawing nearer. When he was once assured of this, Sammy's heart became more turbulent than fast walking had made it, and was so near choking him that it seemed as if he could never live till the fox came within shot. On she came, now no longer a speck, now brush, now legs, now ears, defined against the shining background, and now far down its length she sprang lightly to the top of one wall, half turned and looked toward the pursuing hound, and then, with long leaps, went down the wall out of sight beyond the brow of the hill. Was this some variation of her usual tricks, and was she gone for good and all? the boy asked himself with a sinking heart.

Two minutes went by with not a sight of her, and he was about climbing the wall for a farewell look. But just in the nick of time he saw her returning, running at long leaps a little distance from the wall till she was

past the place where she first came to it, when she again sprang to the top of it and came picking her way toward the four corners. Somehow, for all the fox returned so suddenly, the boy's heart did not fall into such a wild tumult as before. When he raised his gun slowly to his cheek the muzzle did n't wobble. It was the old she fox of Hedge Hog Hill, sure enough; her grizzly mask, her ears notched in many a vulpine squabble were pricked intently to every note of the hound. Alas for her, that her eyes, so expressive of cunning, were not looking further ahead to see the danger that lay crouching where she so confidently sought safety.

Now she halted and half turned to look and listen to that tireless baying hound, who was soon to be counted out of the game when she would take her ease on some fir-embowered rock of the mountain steeps. But the deadly aim was upon her even now; there was a deafening noise in her ears like a burst of midsummer thunder, and a great cloud of white smoke unrolled upon her, in the midst of which she was smitten down into the snow,

by a deadly pang boring its way into her side. Sammy did not wait to climb the wall, but tumbled over it pellmell, taking the top stones with him, and scarcely regaining his feet before he reached his victim. When he saw her lying there unable to rise, yet turning an alert eye upon him, while her life's blood was spending, his luck seemed too good to be true, and as he slowly realized it, he was ready to laugh, cry, or shout for joy, and combined the three in a sound so strange that it startled him.

The hound was drawing near, and as his eager notes pierced the clouded senses of the dying fox she lifted her head and made a desperate but futile struggle to get to her feet. Sammy had heard of foxes escaping even at such a pass, and prudently set his foot upon her neck; but the dog was upon her in an instant, and the boy withdrew his foot out of danger without delay, whereupon the fox seized Drive by the nose, and got one last sweet morsel of revenge, that was duly acknowledged by a yell of pain and rage. Then with a savage crunch the life was shaken out of the gallant old vixen.

There would be no more laughing at the boy, now that he had circumvented the tricks of this wary old mother of freebooters, without help or advice from any one, and for whose death every poultry breeder in Danvis would be thankful, nor could any one say this was a chance shot, when the thickly punctured pelt would show how true the aim was. It was glory enough for one day, and there was nothing to do now but take off the skin and carry it home in triumph. Yet it was not to be just so, for when he went into his pockets, lo, his knife was not in any of them! So long useless, it had been forgotten. So he shouldered the fox, and, with Drive following, after a long wistful look backward at the wooded steeps, set forth homeward, as happy a boy as the world held.

"Good airth an' seas! If this 'ere boy hain't be'n an' gone an' killed a fox all alone by hisself!" cried Uncle Lisha, overwhelmed by surprise, expressed in every look and motion, as he dropped tools and work, pushed his spectacles far upon his forehead, struggled to his feet, and pranced wildly forward to meet Sammy.

The boy entered the shop, and proudly swinging the burden from his shoulder, remarked in assumed indifference, "I forgot my knife, an' so I had to lug the crittur all the way hum! I tell ye what, foxes is heavy, come tu lug 'em tew mild."

"Yes, yes, I guess they be; jes' as solid as ol' pork; but you was glad o' the chance tu lug it, wa'n't ye, Bub? Hev ye showed the folks in the haouse what ye done? Jerushy! Huldy! Come right here quick an' see what this boy 's done!"

His uproarious call brought the two women and Polly hurrying to the shop, as it might all the neighborhood if it had been weather for open doors and windows, and they purred over the boy, and praised him to his heart's content. He was glad that he had forgotten his knife, for a whole fox was better worth showing than a mere skin, and was a world's wonder to little sister. No longer trying to curb his exultation, he told excitedly all the story of his achievement to his audience, the feminine majority kindly making pretense of interest in every incident.

"Why, for all this livin' world!" cried

Uncle Lisha, finding fresh cause for surprise as he made a closer examination of the fox's carcass, "if I don't r'al'y b'lieve this 'ere 's the ol' Haidge Hog Hill fox, — the very same ol' crittur me an' you was a-watchin' playin' wi' her young uns when you was a shaver. I gi'n her a hint to look aout" — He checked himself, for he became aware that he might reveal an unpleasant secret to the womenkind. "We did n't think you 'd be a-killin' on her so soon. My! haow time does paig away! Tu-day it 's a baby's shoes, tu-morrer a half-growed boy's stogies." And the old man sighed, thinking how his little boy was growing out of one sort of camaraderie.

"Just lay your fox on them luther scraps an' you can skin it comf'table," he said, as the women withdrew, and Sammy, nothing loath to accept such warm quarters for what promised to be a tedious job for his inexperienced hands, sharpened his knife and set about it.

"Poor ol' foxey," said Uncle Lisha, musing over the furry form; "she won't raise no more fam'lies in Haidge Hawg laidges,

an' I tell ye what, Bub, your father won't be none tew glad on't," he added in a lowered tone.

Sammy thought it very hard that some would not be suited, whether he killed a fox or not.

"Wal, nev' mind; she can't be fetched tu life naow," said Uncle Lisha. "But I swan, it makes me feel kinder lunsome thinkin' haow we shan't never see her no more a-shoolin' back an' tu on this ar'nt an' that. A hard life she 's had on't, fust an' last, but it was her'n, an' she got the best she could aout on't, ever sen' she was a leetle teenty, tawnty, peaked-tailed cub a-playin' wi' her mammy an' mates up in the aidge o' the woods tu Haidge Hawg, afore you was borned, mebby."

"Oh, du you know 'baout her, Uncle Lisher?" Sammy asked, hungering for one of the old stories, somehow grown infrequent of late.

"Wal, I can kinder guess some, an' some I du know," said the old man, nothing loath for a renewal of the old intercourse, and beginning at once at the boy's eager "Oh, tell!"

"Wal, fust she knowed she opened her eyes in a dark hole, snuggled up tu her mammy wi' her brothers an' sisters, an' then it wa'n't long afore they was all layin' aout in the sunshine, the grass beginnin' tu grow an' the fust birds come. An' then their mammy was off nights, comin' hum airly, naow wi' a maou'ful o' mice or a rabbit or pa'tridge, an' sometimes, don't ye b'lieve, wi' a cat, an' naow an' agin wi' a young skunk, an' caounted it proper good strong victuals; an' the' was mushrat an' woo'chuck, and I do' know what all; an' byme by the ol' one come home mornin's wi' a lamb, an' then turkeys an' chickens, an' tu rights the' was wings an' laigs an' feathers scattered raoun' the burrer so thick you could n't help a-noticin'. So someb'dy did, an' 't was n't long 'fore they come for tu dig 'em aout. The ol' lady 'd showed her young uns 'at there was more 'n one door tu their haouse, but 'stead o' runnin' aout o' the back door when the folks come to the front, the leetle fools scatted clean int' the furder chamber, — all but this one; she run aout, 'long wi' her mammy, an' she stood off a-barkin' her heart

aout tu see her babies dug aout an kerried off right afore her face an' eyes. They wa'n't killed, but took captive, an' gi'n raoun' tu one an' another an' chained up or put in a pen for folks tu come an' gawp at an' pester.

"Tom Hamlin had one 'at he put a chain ontu an' hed a box wi' a hole in the side tu run intu, comf'table as you please, an' his mammy useter go nights an' visit him an' kerry him mice, an' l'arn him tricks 'at gi'n him lots o' fun. But one on 'em was pooty nigh his ondoin'. He scattered his crumbs wi'in reach o' his chain, an' lay back makin' b'lieve he was asleep, a-peekin' aout'n the corner o' one eye, till byme by a fool of a half-growed chicken 'ld come gawkin' raound a-pickin' up crumbs, an' fust he knowed Mr. Fox hed him an' he was a spilte wruster. Tom was a-goin' tu quit keepin' a wil' beast show, but his boy begged so hard foxey's life was saved, but his chain was shortened up consid'able. Arter a spell it got a weak place wore in it so 't the fox got a twist on't 'at broke it, an' away he scooted for the woods. The strap choked him as his

neck growed, but his mammy gnawed it off arter a spell, an' in course o' time the hul caboodle o' the litter got away somehaow, 'ceptin' one 'at was sol' tu a caravan, an' went a-travelin' fur an' near an' see more folks 'an 'most any fox 'at ever lived. Wal, ol' Marm Fox she sot tu l'arn'n' her fam'ly haow tu git an honest livin' in the woods an' off'm the farms where the ol' women raised poultry for 'em, easier ketched 'an the pa'tridge an' rabbits or half-growed crows 'at lit raound huntin' grubs, an' l'arnt 'em tu take up wi' beechnut an' acorn shack an' grasshoppers when the' wa'n't better, an' tu look aout for the smell of a man whenever they faound it as the dang'ousest thing the' was, an' tu go on fresh airth an' naked rock an' ice tu hide the' own scent from haoun' dawgs, an' took 'em over all the runways wi'in four mild. An' then she turned 'em aout in the world tu shift for the'selves, kinder watchin' aout tu see haow they made it.

"One went right contr'y tu what she tol' him, a-foolin' raoun' where the' was a hunk o' skunk meat stuck on a stick aout in a

puddle o' water, wi' a piece o' sod halfway aout from the bank jest handy tu put a foot on an' reach aout to 't. It smelt strong o' skunk an' mushrat musk an' anise, an' the' wa'n't no smell o' human 'baout, but it looked kinder fixed up, an' the ol' un says, says she, 'You let that 'ere alone; the' 's things 'nough t' eat besides that 'ere.' But he wus one o' 'your know-it-alls,' an' hed to jest smell on't oncte. So he sot his fore foot on the sod an' reached aout so keerful he knowed it could n't du no hurt, but the' was a snap an' a bile in the water, an' his foot was in a grip as if a mud-turkle hed a-holt on't.

"Back he jumped twicte his len'th an' went a-sprawlin' on his back, but for all it pooty nigh pulled his laig off, the trap hung, an' kep' a-hangin' for all his yankin' an' squallin', an' all he could du was drag the hul bilin', trap an' clog, along the graoun' till it ketched, an' then yank an' work till it leggo. He might ha' gnawed his foot off, as his mammy tol' him tu, but he kep' a-wastin' time, a-draggin' an' a-twitchin' a hull day, till it was tew late, an' along come a

man an' knocked him in the head wi' a hatchet, so that was the end o' him!

"'T was one way an' 'nother wi' the rest on 'em — a-gittin' hunted an' trapped an' steerin' clear an' not, but this 'ere particilar one was the cutest an' allers the favoryte wi' her mammy. She 'd remember what she was tol', an' did n't fool raoun' no traps ner pizen bait, — the' be them 'at pizens foxes, — an' the fust time a haoun' got arter her she played him some pooty smart capers. She run in a dusty rhud, an' through a flock o' sheep, an' top o' fences, an' finally bothered him so on a windy laidge 'at he gin it up. But one time aour ol' Drive got arter her an' gin her a tough one. Try what she would, sheep, or fences, or plaowed land, or laidges, or ice, he 'd stick tu her ju' like teazles, a-circling till he hit her track on good follerin' an' sent her skivin' till she was nigh about tuckered, an' then her mammy come an' mixed her track all up wi' the young un's so the ol' dawg got off arter the ol' one, a thing he did n't often do, an' she led him a wil'-goose chase over sheep paths an' laidges till she was so fur ahead, his voice was lunsome

as a bluebird's song in the fall. When she could n't sca'cely hear it, she put her cross lots for the maountin lickety-rip up a gully an' up the bank on't, not thinkin' nobody wi'in milds, when, kerslap, she come onter a man, which it was your father, of all men in the world! She stopped so quick she nigh abaout keeled over, an' then turned tail an' skinned for su'thin' tu git behind, — a tree, or stump, or rock, — but the' wa'n't none for rods an' rods. An' so as she was layin' herself stret, wi' her ears clus tu her head an' her tail the size o' your laig, Whang! went the ol' gun behind her an' daown she went wi' a broken hip.

"The man was halfway tu her afore she could gather; but when she did, her three laigs was tew many for his tew, for all the mis'able broken one a-floppin' loose an' achin' wus 'n forty teethaches, an' she got tu the woods afore he could load a-runnin', an' then p'inted for a hole she knowed on. It run 'way back 'n' under a big rock, so the' wa'n't no sech a thing as diggin' on her aout, which your father was turrible sorry 'baout. Your father stopped the hole, an' went an' got a

trap, an' sot it tu ketch her when she tried tu come aout" —

"What!" cried Sammy, all agape with surprise, "my daddy set a trap for a fox? I don't b'lieve it."

"Why, yes, Bub, when one was waounded so an' sufferin', but not no other ways. Wal, when he went tu look at it two three days arter, she hed n't be'n anigh the trap, an' when he s'arched all raound the laidge for another hole, he faound a narrer crack wi' some mice poked into 't. Yes, sir, this 'ere young un had be'n an' gone an' took feed tu her ol' distressed mammy, jest as duterful as a humern, — yes, more 'n some," and the old man sighed.

"He hated tu, but he stopped up that place, an' pooty soon ketched the ol' un as nigh dead as alive. Wal, this un was all alone in the world wi'aout kith or kin, an' lunsome enough, but she come o' that, as foxes an' mortals du, an' enjoyed life a-scootin' raound in the woods huntin' pa'tridge an' rabbits as her marm had l'arnt her. But it was the biggest fun in spring when the young lambs come, tu cut intu a flock o'

gre't big ewes an' kerry off a lamb 'most as heavy as herself.

"Or in summer tu find a flock of half-growed turkeys strayin' raound the lots an' kill beyund all reason ten times more 'n she an' all her fam'ly could eat, — for she hed her a fam'ly then. Like 'nough 't would be right in sight of a haouse, wi' an' ol' womern lookin' on, rarin' an' tarin' an' siccin' the dawg on, whilst Mis' Foxey slewed 'em right an' left, an' then slung one over her shoulder an' off int' the woods afore the dawg got halfway. That was fun alive tu see the turkeys a-flutterin' an' flyin' an' yelpin', an' 't was payin' the folks for killin' the foxes off, an' 't wa'n't no worse for her 'an for them, for they all done it come fall, an' she knowed she killed mice enough tu pay for all she took. But it wa'n't the way they looked at it.

"The way of her hevin' a fam'ly was, when it come pleasant nights in February, the moon shinin' so 't the snow looked whiter 'n it does in sunshine, an' the shadders so blue they was 'most black, the' come a harnsome young fox a-caperin' raound her on the eends o' his toes an' his tail a-stickin' up like a

rauster's. His fur was as red as a cherry an' his tail as big as your laig, — gosh, yes, mine, — an' a white tip on't six inches long. He jest put his best foot for'ard for her, an' she could n't stir a rod 'at he wa'n't with her, an' the eend on't was they was merried. They lived here an' there, a-sleepin' in pleasant nights on a snow-kivered rock or stump or a nest o' wild grass, wi' one ear cocked for'ard and t'other back'ard an' noses sot for any scent the wind might kerry. When the' come a-rippin' ol' storm they 'd git intu a den or burrer an' weather it aout snug as a flea in a blanket.

"Come spring they cleaned aout an ol' burrer tu Haidge Hawg Hill an' went tu haousekeepin' in airnest, an' nex' thing the' was four baby foxes. Tew on 'em was ju' like or'nary fox babies, but one was mos' black, an' 'nother a measly lookin' little runt wi' hair as if he 'd be'n singed. But his marm sot jest as much by him as she did t'others, an' when it come tu feedin' on 'em mice an' sech, she see 't he had his full sheer. If he 'd ha' growed up he would n't never looked no better, for he was what they call a

Samson fox, the idee bein', I s'pose, 'at they come down from them 'at Samson sot fire tu an' le' go in the Philistynes' cornfiel's, a turrible cur'ous way o' burnin' on't, it al'ays 'peared tu me. Hunters shoot 'em when they come along, but they hain't sca'cely wuth skinnin'. But he never growed up. One moonlight night the fam'ly was loafin' aou'-door a-snappin' at May bugs 'at was a-blunderin' 'raound, when the' come a shadder, an' clust behind it, wi'aout no more n'ise, a big-headed, long-eared ol' hoot aowl an' grabbed poor leetle Samson an' off wi' him like a evil sperit. Mis' Fox run arter him, a-barkin' an' squallin', but that was all she could du, an' the last she ever see o' poor leetle Samson, 'ceptin' a few bones an' wapse o' his fraowzly fur. She felt jest as bad for him as if he 'd be'n her biggest an' harnsomest. When that one got growed up he was harnsome, I tell ye. His sides was gray an' a black stripe run daown his back wi' another acrost the shoulders, an' his tail black wi' a white tip to 't. He was what they call a cross fox, not on 'caount o' bein' uglier 'n or'nary ones, but o' the cross on the back.

A sort o' come-by-chance they be, sca'ce as they be, an' wuth three four times as much as the reds. So when this chap got big 'nough tu go wanderin' an' seen o' men he was sometimes took for a black or a silver gray, wuth ever so much more, an' every hunter was arter him hot-footed afore he got prime, an' the' was traps gapin' for him sot by folks 'at never sot a trap afore."

"Did my daddy?" Sammy asked, half fearing a fall for his idol.

"No, indeedy, not he!" Uncle Lisha answered very decidedly. "But him an' ol' Drive was arter that fox airly an' late. Your dad would take the dawg off at dark, an' Mr. Fox 'd lay up for the night, hopin' he 'd got red on 'em. But it would n't more 'n come daylight afore 't was up an' at it agin wi' ol' Drive hootin' on his track.

"So wi' dodgin' runways here and runways there, an' tryin' ol' tricks an' new, he come tu be sharp as a sewin' awl, an' the cutest chap a-goin'. Lord, haow praoud his mammy was tu see him foolin' Sam Lovel an' ol' Drive day arter day an' then year arter year, till the ol' dawg died an' a new one

come. T'other tew cubs went off one way an' 'nother, an' many a litter 'at come arter, an' time an' agin she was left mournin', yet this feller hel' on ju' like a witch.

"One day the ol' lady heard haoun's runnin', an' knowed by the twistin' an' turnin' an' gittin' bothered that her Crossy was a-leadin' on 'em. She cal'lated where he 'd p'int for tu lay up when he 'd got fur 'nough ahead, an' mawged off that way tu hev a visit. Byme by the haoun's was n't barkin' oncte in half an hour, an' thinks, says she, he 's all right, an' then she hear a gun roar in the woods pooty near the line he 'd come. She listened an' heard someb'dy callin' dawgs, an' then nothin' more till they bu'st aout fresh a minute, an' then shet up as sudden. Then her heart misgi'n her. Arter lis'nin' a long spell she went on again keerful, hopin' the best, but at last she smelt fox an' humern an' dawg all mixt, an' come tu some blood an' a bunch o' black an' gray fur, an' seen a karkis hangin' in a crotch, an' then she knowed the pride o' her heart was gone.

"It wa'n't no use o' tryin' tu escape it; death was a-layin' in wait for her an' her'n

when an' where they was least expectin' on't. An' so it come her turn at last, right where she 'd fooled the haoun's a hunderd times, an' wi' her dyin' eyes she seen 't was nothin' but a boy 'at done it; one 'at she 'd thought she could fool any time. Mebby she thought what turrible critturs these men folks was when the young uns could du for the oldest experiencest foxes, an' mebby she wondered why the world wa'n't wide 'nough for both tu live in wi'aout them big critturs etarnally parsecutin' the small uns an' thought what a pleasant place 't would be if it only was.

"But she 'd come tu the eend on't, pleasure, trouble, an' all, an' you an' me won't hev no more fun watchin' her an' her young uns. Ta' keer, Bub, you don't cut that ear off tew long an' spile the looks o' the pelt."

"Oh, dear, Uncle Lisher, I 'most wish I hed n't shot her!" Sammy cried out in contrition of spirit.

CHAPTER XVII

ANTOINE

Sammy did not continue contrite very long. The praise that he got was more than enough to soothe any pangs of remorse that were raised by Uncle Lisha's story of the life he had taken. It came from almost every one, and almost unstinted. Even his Grandmother Purington went so far as to say: —

"That 'ere boy hes done suthin' wuth while for oncte which the men could n't or would n't du," then heaved a deep sigh and had recourse to her smelling bottle; "but it 'll be a massy if it don't finish spilin' on him, an' set him trampoosin' fur an' near, wi' a gun an' a haoun' dawg, the hul indurin' time."

His father looked somewhat chapfallen when he learned the identity of Sammy's victim, but complimented him generously on

his sharpness in forestalling her tricks. "An' did n't I tell ye you 'd git your shot when the time come?"

Gran'ther Hill hailed him from the window to repeat what he had long ago foretold, that he would one day make a keen fox-hunter. Mrs. Hill rejoiced that a new defender of her poultry had arisen, and best of all the pretty face of his sweetheart was wreathed with a proud and happy smile.

Whenever he stopped at a house where he was known for a drink of water when he was hunting, the fame of his exploit had gone before him, and the goodwife was sure to offer doughnuts and cheese to the protector of poultry yards. Old fox-hunters condescended to talk to him of hounds and foxes, and treated him as an entered apprentice of the craft. But Antoine was incorrigible.

"Ah 'll hear 'em said, some of it, dat fox you 'll gat hees skin of it, was be so hol' he 'll jes' gat ready for dead for hol', an' fall off de walls an' keel he'se'f. Den some of it said, de fox was be so scare of de nowse de gawn mek raght in hees face of it, he 'll had some kan' o' fit in hees heart an' come dead so.

Naow, you tol' me de way he was, Bawb. Ah 'll an't tol' somebody, me."

"You can go an' look o' the shot marks in the pelt if you want tu find aout," Sammy answered testily.

"Poh! Dat an't not'ing," Antoine scoffed. "You could shot it jes' well hafter hees dead as 'fore. Oh, Ah 'll de boy for keel de fox w'en Ah leave in Canada, jes' wid club. Ah 'll see fox on de lot, hunt some mices, den Ah 'll hid mase'f behin' stump an' skreek jes' lak mices, 'Speep! Speep!'" — drawing in his breath between his compressed lips, — "an' dat foxes he 'll stick his ear an' come raght where Ah 'll be, an' Ah 'll stroke it wid club! Yas, sah, Bawb! An' Ah 'll do dat two tree tam, me. Den one tam Ah 'll skreek so preffic Ah 'll fool de fox so bad, he 'll come jomp raght hover de stomp an' touch hol' mah back neck an' an't le' go 'fore Ah 'll holler lak loons. 'F you 'll an't b'leeve dat, you look dat scars. What you t'ink for dat, hein?"

A convenient cicatrix left by a boil of long ago furnished a confirmation of the story, yet Sammy was incredulous and asked rather

impudently, "Which is the biggest fools in Canada, the folks or the foxes?"

"You sassy leetly causs!" Antoine cried, in a towering rage. "You t'ink de peop' in Canada an't know some more as you damn Yankee?"

"No, they don't!" Sammy stoutly asserted, loyal to his own people.

"Bah gosh, den Ah leek you for show you de Canada mans he an't rembler so much every day as de Yankee mans know all hees laf-tam!" And with that he advanced in a series of short jumps, seeming to lift himself by the baggy seat of his trousers, and uttering a frightful roar from his disturbed and violently shaken visage.

He cut such an absurd figure that at first Sammy thought it all a joke, but a second look at Antoine's face convinced him that his wrath was genuine. Though frightened, Sammy was of no mind to run, but backed away from his assailant, searching the ground out of the tail of an eye for some means of defense. Presently he discovered the boy's natural weapon, a stone, and laying hold of it stood at bay, and at once felt strengthened.

"Naow, don't you come a-nigh me, Mr. Antoine," he said.

Antoine executed another series of leaps without advancing, and roared more terribly, but Sammy stood his ground with his weapon at a ready, whereupon the expression of the Canadian's face changed from intense wrath to a blank, then to one of astonishment, and then began slowly to widen into an intended expression of mirthfulness, but it was a mournful failure. A little beyond him Sammy caught fleeting glimpses of a faded fur cap showing and hiding behind a scrawny thicket of wild plums in a roadside fence corner. The old cap had a familiar individuality, and beneath its torn and notched visor shone a pair of honest, kindly eyes watching every motion of Antoine.

"Ho! Ho! Ho! Ho!" Antoine roared hilariously. "What hailed you, Bawb? An't you t'ink Ah 'll was jes' in funs? You t'ink Ah 'll mad? You an't t'ink Ah 'll wan' hurt you, don't you? Bah gosh! Ah 'll lak you fader sem Am do mah brudder. An' all hees fam'ly, bah gosh, too! T'row dawn you stone, mah boy, t'row him dawn."

Sammy hesitated, not quite convinced by Antoine's friendly declarations of the expediency of disarming himself. Just then the old fur cap with Pelatiah Gove under it walked from behind the plum-tree thicket and lounged into the road.

"Hello, Antoine!" he drawled; "you an' Sammy hevin' a argerment this mornin'?"

The Canadian wheeled about quickly, quite taken by surprise, and Sammy quietly dropped the stone.

"Gosh a'maghty, Peltare, you mos' scare me!" cried the first, violently exhaling the words. "Ah 'll an't know you was in four mile, me."

"I p'sume likely," said Pelatiah. "You was makin' consid'able noise one spell."

"Gosh! You hear me?" Antoine laughed, apparently much amused. "Ah 'll was jes' try for had leetly funs wid de boy 'baout hees fox."

"Gol, is that all? I cal'lated by the noise you made you was hevin' one o' them mad fits o' yourn," said Pelatiah demurely.

"Bah gosh! 'F you 'll ever see me w'en Ah 'll mad Ah guess you 'll an't t'ink so!"

said Antoine, with a scornful laugh and a terribly fierce look. "Four mans can' hol' me, an' mak holler shook de winder! Ah 'll was honly w'isper distance. Say, Peltare, Sammy pooty smart boy for keel dat hol' fox all 'lone, Ah tol' you, hein? He 'll goin' mek jes' such mans lak hees fader."

"He 'll make a good one, then," said Pelatiah, "'most as good as they make 'em in Canerdy. Come, Bub, be you goin' towards hum? I was goin' tu git a leetle job done tu Uncle Lisher's," and with that they parted company with Antoine, who henceforth spoke only in praise of Sammy's exploits.

"My, I was scairt!" said Sammy, exhaling a long-drawn breath when out of earshot. "I s'pected he was goin' tu give me a hidin'."

"Wal, he would n't ha'. I was a-watchin' on him from behind the bushes," said Pelatiah meekly.

"You was? Oh, Peltier" —

"You was right 'long as you kep' holt o' your stun, only I was 'feard you 'd drop it when he begin a soft-sawd'rin', an' so I come aout."

They plodded on in silence till they came to the shop. When Sammy was absent from it, Pelatiah entertained Uncle Lisha with the morning's adventure while the old man sewed up a ripped seam of his bootleg.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE SCHOOLMASTER

WINTER school was in session again with Mr. Mumpson in his accustomed place, and the families of the district impatiently waiting their turn to board the favorite teacher, who never found fault with fare or accommodations, and was always on the friendliest terms with his entertainers.

Now he was lodged for a fortnight at Joseph Hill's, whose good wife was exercising her culinary skill to the utmost for his sake, and every member of the household doing the best to make his sojourn pleasant. When the family was fairly seated at the bountiful supper, the patriarch never failed to ask: —

"Wal, schoolmaster, haow many lickin's hev you gi'n these 'ere young uns to-day?"

Mr. Mumpson, clearing his throat, would answer apologetically, "Why, the fact is,

Captain Hill, they 've all behaved so uncommonly well that I have n't been obliged to chastise any one to-day."

"Good Lord!" the veteran cried, with hands uplifted, "a hul day an' nary a lickin'. That wa'n't the way we useter l'arn young uns in my time. When I kep' school I hed me a good blue beech gad handy, an' I used it tew, an' I tell ye the' 's nothin' tu beat blue beech for tu make a young un remember his lesson. Why, when the country was new an' all woods, a man 'ld take his boys tu the corner trees of his lot an' tie 'em up tu 'em an' give 'em an almighty good hidin' wi' a blue beech, an' I tell ye what, they would n't never forgit them corners."

"I should think they would be likely to remember," said the schoolmaster.

"Jes' so, an' jes' the same it 'll make a boy remember the lessons he l'arns aout'n books. It 'ld help aour Bub an' Ben amazin' if you trim 'em aout 'baout every other day." He glowered upon the boys, who cautiously raised their eyes from their plates enough to see that the fierceness of his glance was tempered by a mirthful twinkle of the deep-

set gray orbs that shone so keen beneath the overhanging brows that Mr. Mumpson, given to poetic imagery, likened them to ambushed sharpshooters. The boys were thankful that their school days had not fallen within the harsh sway of their grandfather. The veteran was very fond of the schoolmaster, and the two got on excellently, notwithstanding Gran'ther's harsh criticism of modern modes of education.

"What 's the good o' this 'ere Matthew Mattick's tarnal books?" he demanded. "He hed n't got 'em made when I was goin' tu school, nor yet a-keepin', — do' know as he was borned as he never 'd orter be'n, an' we got along jest ezackly as well — an' then this 'ere grammer. What is it for?"

"Why, Captain Hill, grammar teaches us to speak and write correctly."

"Oh, thunder, we spoke an' writ so 't we understood one 'nother, an' what more d' ye want? I tell ye, they 're all flummadiddle, your grammer an' your Matthew Mattick an' your square-rhut. Square-rhuts be cussed! Raound rhuts is good 'nough for or'nary folks! In my time we l'arned

readin' an' writin' an' 'rithmertic, an' if a feller ciphered as fur as the rule o' three, he was king-pin. More 'n them would n't ha' helped us none 'baout choppin' an' loggin', an' squabblin' wi' Yorkers, an' fightin' Injuns an' Britishers, — no, no, not a soumarkee! But what I should like to know is, what on this livin' airth you, yourself, be everlastin'ly a-studyin' an' a-readin' that 'ere consarned Latin lingo for every identical night. Be you expectin' for tu go a-missionaryin' amongst them Latin critturs? Would n't they eat ye, suppose?" he added, glancing at the master's lean figure.

The young man had pleasanter intercourse with his aged host when, settled for the long evening in his armchair with his pipe alight, he told of the bitter feud of the Green Mountain Boys and New York land speculators, of scouts and battles in which he had borne part, or repeated, as he had heard them told by actors and eyewitnesses, the bloody tragedies of the old French war, whereof the schoolmaster made careful and copious notes with a view to future use in his projected "Early History of Vermont." His

finger slipped from its place in the shut volume of the Iliad, and he forgot the battles of Greeks and Trojans as he listened, with pride swelling his heart, to the unsung heroic deeds of his own humble ancestors.

One evening during the season of waiting their turn to entertain the master, the Lovel household was at supper with the addition of Polly Purington to the number. Polly had the privileges of a member of the family, and ran in at meal time with perfect freedom if it suited her convenience. Perhaps this was more than usually the case now that there was a "spelling school" that night.

"Oh, Sammy Lovel!" she cried, shaking her knife at her nephew after buttering a half of one of Huldah's buttermilk biscuits, fleece-white and fleece-light in spite of the much-abused pearlash, and overlaying it with the honey of Sam's wild bees, "if you did n't make me ashamed the way you got your 'rithmatic lesson to-day!"

The boy's face blazed red hot with shame at having his shortcomings so ruthlessly exposed, and he did not hesitate to retaliate

by a sharp thrust in the only explanation he could give: "I don't care. They 're awful hard sums! Mebby 'f I hed someb'dy tu set by me an' show me half the time, I — I 'd be smart at figures."

"Why, Sammy, who does?" his mother asked.

"You ask Aun' Polly," he answered, casting a vindictive glance at his buxom young aunt, whose cheeks began to outburn his own. "I don't tell tales out o' school!"

Little Polly had no scruples when so good an opportunity was given, and piped up shrilly and eagerly: "Oh, I know who! It 's Mr. Mumpson! Every time Aun' Polly gits stuck, he goes an' sets by her an' splains an' splains."

"What be you young uns talkin' about?" said Polly Purington, her eyes flashing angry glances upon her nephew and niece. "Mr. Mumpson don't show me no more 'n he does anyb'dy."

"Ah, ha, Miss Polly! So that 's the way the cat jumps, is it?" said Sam, looking at his sister-in-law with a quizzical expression on his surprised face.

"I don't care, it hain't no sech a thing!" she cried, pouting.

"No, you don't look as if 't was," Huldah quietly remarked. "My! Your cheeks 'll set your hair afire."

Presently the schoolmaster and the Hill boys and girls came in, having come to get a better start, as they said; and then after a little bustle of preparation the company set forth in the double track that hoofs and runners had made along the snowy road. The young fry led the van with all manner of pranks that the exuberant spirits of youth could suggest, until they seemed to be in a competition of grotesque forms with the distorted moonlight shadows. After them followed the grown-up boys and girls, more staid of mien, yet breaking out now and then in some irrepressible freak; and last of all Sam and Huldah, each carrying an iron candlestick and spare candle, and each with newly awakened eyes upon the schoolmaster and Polly, who walked before them, a well-mated pair, Huldah thought, but for a matter of eight or ten years' difference in their ages. She was fairly out of patience

when Sam allowed his attention to their demeanor and her own pantomimic comments to be so far withdrawn as to listen to the wild barking of a fox far away in the hills, faintly heard among the echoed shouts and laughter of the youngsters.

While the young and the middle-aged thus wended their way to the schoolhouse, the elderly folk bided at home sharing the light labors of evening housekeeping with the dogs and cats. Uncle Lisha excused himself on the plea that he "could n't spell 'baker' wi' the book open afore him;" Aunt Jerusha on that of "rheumatiz," and Timothy Lovel declared for the snug corner between the stove and wood box.

The cosy restfulness of the room might tempt any one to remain in it with the elderly people, whose light labor was little more than pastime that did not interrupt conversation except when Aunt Jerusha counted the stitches of her knitting. Uncle Lisha braided a woodchuck skin whiplash in most approved contour of swell and taper, and Timothy Lovel braided long, bristling ropes of corn husks for mats, while the stove

roared, popped, and crackled a lively accompaniment to the long, monotonous song of the teakettle, the moving and smothered dream-baying of the hound, and the purring of the cats.

Hooks and poles over the stove supported a few strings of late-dried apples and some shriveled rings of pumpkin-like necklaces of old gold, beside two or three clean dish towels slowly waving in the currents of hot air. On the corner of the scoured kitchen table a tallow dip, in a bright iron stick, with snuffers, tray, and extinguisher beside it, dimly lighted the work, and cast faint shadows on the ceiling of choice ears of seed corn stretching across the cracked and wrinkled whitewash, and on the walls, shadows of chairs and great and little wheels, one saddled with its bundles of white rolls, the other crowned with its distaff full of fluffy flax. Their shadows were plain silhouette, for the wheels and the reel that clicked at every fortieth turn, most coveted plaything of children, were shoved close to the wall as if symbolic of their retreat into the background of the passing years, where the cards

and the loom had already taken their places. The rolls were made by the carding machine; most of the cloth woven at the factory where much of the woolen spinning was beginning to be done. So the arts of hand-carding and hand-weaving were no longer indispensable parts of a girl's education, and even the beautiful and graceful art of wool-spinning was no longer taught to every girl. Old folks mourned the degenerate days when the musical hum of the great wheel should be no longer heard.

"If Polly does up an' git married, I do' know what she 'll do for a settin' aout," Uncle Lisha said, as his eyes wandered over to the silent wheels and reel. "I don't s'pose she could spin a run o' yarn tu save her."

"Law sakes! Her mother 's got a 'stro'-nary settin' aout all pervided — more 'n as much agin as Huldy ever had; stuff 'at she 's saved up, an' stuff 'at she 's spun, an' wove no eend o' linen sheets an' woolen sheets for winter, an' tew thirty-paound live-geese feather beds!"

"Wal, Huldy's Polly 'll know haow tu spin an' weave, I 'll warrant ye, an' not be

beholden tu nob'dy for her beddin'," Uncle Lisha said.

"I d' know 'baout that," said Timothy, shaking his head dubiously. "It 's all for bein' pop'lar naowerdays, an' mebby Huldy 'll foller the fashi'n wi' Sis. She 's a-cuttin' an' sewin' rags tu weave her a carpet for the square room, an' fust ye know, a h'us'mat won't be good 'nough for the front door."

"I 'll resk Huldy," Uncle Lisha declared, more loyal to his favorite than her father-in-law was.

"Ye can't tell what women folks 'll du when they git envyous an' tryin' tu be the pop'larist," Timothy insisted. "There 's Goveses folks, — coarser 'n all tow, the old ones be, but the youngest girl she 's up an' had her a m'lodeon, they call it! My senses!"

"Yes, I know, an' it squeaks an' grunts ju' luk a litter o' hungry pigs."

"Sho, naow, Lisher!" Aunt Jerusha expostulated. "I hearn Philury a-playin' on her music, an' it 's raal pooty."

"Pooty! Oh, you go 'long wi' your non-

sense!" the old man snorted contemptuously. "I'd 'nough sight livser hear you a-tunin' up on the big wheel. But that don't signify; Huldah hain't Goveses folks," and with that the subject was dropped, while the unison of drowsy sounds resumed its sway, punctuated by the slow tick of the clock and the sharp irregular crackle of the fire.

Gran'ther Hill, from his judgment seat, growled his denunciation of modern spelling, and swore by the Lord Harry, "It should n't unjint his time-honored methods, an' he wa'n't a-goin' nigh the blasted spellin' bee." But Joseph attended, and even stood up to spell.

The scene recalled to the elders the evenings of their youth, so slight were the changes the years had wrought in the room. The plaster of the walls was but little more broken, the desks and seats but little more scarred by the knives of a succeeding generation. The rusty stove and battered pipe roared and crackled as of yore, and there were the familiar odors of old unpainted woods and musty books, and the lingering mixed fragrance of the pies, cake, doughnuts,

apples, and cheese of cold dinners, all dissipated for the instant by the influx of fresh outer air brought with each new arrival, and then settling to resumption of their sway. But how changed the faces, — new ones in the places of old, and youthful ones grown mature, and all bringing to the scholars of former years a realization that they were growing old.

The exercises began with the choosing of sides by the schoolmaster and Sam Lovel, and the choice of Solon Briggs to put out words, which part he performed to his great satisfaction, not always suffering himself to be confined to the spelling book for words, but sometimes making excursions into his own wonderful vocabulary, as when he gave out "superguberosity," which no one could spell, to Solon's satisfaction. Joseph Hill was at no loss for ways of spelling the words that came to him, but was troubled in his choice of the right way. However, he had reason to be proud of the proficiency of his children, and was much comforted thereby.

Then some big boys and some little boys recited "Casabianca," "Marco Bozzaris,"

"Hohenlinden," and other district-school favorites, some delivered in bold strident voices, others in abashed and trembling, but all in an unvarying sing-song which, according to the popular idea, constituted the principal difference between poetry and prose. Then the smouldering fire was made safe in a covering of ashes, the candles were blown out, and the company dispersed in the best of humor, each side taking its "spelling down" with jokes and laughter.

An insight peculiar to the feminine mind revealed to Huldah that the schoolmaster and Polly were far gone in love, and as she was not displeased by the discovery, except for not having made it sooner, nor realizing that her sister was no longer a little girl, she made no secret of it. It soon became a matter of neighborhood gossip. Mrs. Purington could not approve of a match that was not of her own making. For which reason, and because she opposed everything on principle, she made unpleasant remarks to those around her, while she comforted herself with silent and somewhat dry weeping and deep-drawn inhalations of hartshorn.

"Nob'dy never asts my 'pinion 'baout nothin'! I hain't nob'dy only Polly's mother, an' 't ain't reasonable they should when it consarns her futur' well-bein'. Oh, dear suzzy day! It seems as 'ough the Ol' Scratch owed me a gretch an' was payin' on't off in son-in-laws. One a fox-hunter, an' naow it 's tu be a schoolmarster. Not but what schoolmarster 's well 'nough, but why could n't it ha' be'n a minister or a marchant? Their wives can be someb'dy. Wal, what can't be cured must be endured, an' like 'nough Mr. Mumpson 'll take tu the ministry arter a spell."

Taking this view of future possibilities she became more reconciled to Polly's engagement, and the course of the young people's love was permitted to run smoothly, except that Polly was taken from school and sent to the new Academy down in Lakefield.

Sammy and his sister continued to trudge to school together summer and winter, really as fond of each other as ever, but becoming a little less companions and playmates as the tastes of the boy and girl more distinctly asserted themselves, and each began to have

confidences and secrets that were only for other boys and other girls. The time soon came when he was grown so tall and strong that his services were needed on the farm, and the musty, choky little schoolroom knew him no more when the spring birds were singing, nor in the summer days.

Sometimes in the soft May weather the big boy would dig worms and get the tackle ready and make Uncle Lisha supremely happy by coaxing him out for a day's fishing. What pleasant memories of the old days it brought back, yet how changed were the conditions, for the caretaker now was the tall, strong boy, and on his stout arm the old man leaned. The pleasant fall brought frequent days even in the midst of corn-husking and potato-digging, when the frosty grass and windless air were temptations too strong for Sam to resist, and he and his boy struck for the woods.

"I 'd ruther husk nights an' dig pertaters nippin' cold days 'an tu waste sech a mornin' as this!" Sam would say, though he would not find his conscience quite stilled until the mellow music of the hound drowned its voice.

At last Sammy quite outgrew his cramped seat in the district school, and vacated it forever. Mr. Mumpson had inspired him with some desire for learning, and there was talk of sending him away to the Academy where Polly had been. While he was dreading this departure from home into the great unknown world outside the Danvis hills with heart-sickening qualms, great events occurred to change the course of humble lives as well as the course of nations.

CHAPTER XIX

IN WAR TIME

It was many years since the cinder-paved streets of the Forge Village had sounded with the metallic notes of fife and drum, not indeed since the farce of June training had fallen into dishonor and disuse, and was remembered only in the titles, which still clung to the surviving officers of the old "Floodwood Militia."

But now, on a bright April day in the year 1861, it was vividly recalled to the minds of elderly men by the unwonted military strains ringing through the usually quiet thoroughfare from the front of Clapham's store, where a fifer and two drummers, who had fortunately preserved the traditions of the past, were shrilling, rattling, and booming the inspiring notes of the national airs with hearty good will. There was the usual attendance of boys, to whom the strange de-

monstration meant only a new source of fun, though they were somewhat awed by the grave faces of their elders, which seemed to denote a lack of proper appreciation of the occasion. A remarkable seriousness pervaded the assembling yeomanry; those who walked singly toward the chief point of interest, the groups that gathered lingering on the way, and the crowd that thronged in front of the unfinished new annex to the store were very quiet, though so evidently moved by suppressed excitement. One would never have thought that these plain, common, unsentimental men could be so deeply stirred by patriotic emotion, not blatantly boasting of what they would do, but quietly determined to do all men could do, to uphold the honor and the life of the nation which were now assailed.

Clapham sat in an armchair on the stoop reading yesterday's daily to a group. Among the listeners stood Joel Bartlett, now a venerable white-haired man, with his back turned upon the musicians, whose noisy performance he quite ignored.

"President calls for seventy-five thousan'

troops," Clapham read. "Bombardment of Fort Sumter still continues. Gov'nor Fairbanks call a' extra settin' of the Leegislature. Enlistments goin' on rapid. Fust rigimint nearly full, an' so futh, and so futh."

Sam Lovel and his son were just then passing, and stopped a moment to listen.

"Fellow citizens of Danvis!" shouted young Lawyer Danforth, a recent importation, who had just displayed his virgin shingle over his office in the chamber of Clapham's store, and now had visions of a captaincy and future civil preferment. "Fellow citizens!" he repeated, making himself heard during a break in the music, "your country expects every man to do his duty. Walk right up and enlist!"

"Hev you?" asked big John Dart.

"No," Danforth answered; "I 'm going to Adams to recruit men to-morrow, and expect to enlist there."

"Oh! mebby so," John Dart remarked dryly, as he and Sam passed into the room, where a lieutenant of the regular army sat writing at an empty dry-goods box.

"Ye would not give heed to the words of

the prophets, and now the jedgment of the Lord has overtaken ye," said Joel Bartlett solemnly. "Woe, woe be unto them against whom His wrath is kindled."

"That 's true enough, Joel," a younger neighbor said, "but I cal'late it 's kindled hotter ag'in the other fellers, and the Lord kinder wants us fur a scourge tu 'em."

"The sin o' slavery is the cause on't all, an' we 're all guilty," Joel responded.

Sammy was looking around for his father, when he saw him coming out of the recruiting office and went to him. Sam's face was very grave, yet shone with a holy elation.

"Come, boy, le' 's go hum naow," said he, passing an arm through his tall son's, whose head was on a level with his own.

"In a minute, daddy; just le' me speak tu Peltier Gove," said Sammy, and he slipped into the crowd and then into the office, where he found Pelatiah at the impromptu desk. "Mr. Gove," he asked, "has father 'listed?"

Pelatiah regarded him fixedly a moment and pointed to the name of "Samuel Lovel" on the roll, and under it he saw that of "Pelatiah Gove."

"Let me put my name daown there, Mister," said Sammy, standing very erect, while the young officer ran an admiring glance over the handsome young figure.

"Is your father willin', Sammy?" Pelatiah asked.

"He did n't ask me," Sammy said, with a little laugh, and having completed his enrollment, quietly rejoined his father. "Le' 's go over where the women 's makin' the flag," he said, and the two went over to the town house, where a score of young women were sewing the stripes of a new flag together, and fixing the stars in the blue field under the direction of Mr. Mumpson, the schoolmaster.

Some giggled and gossiped as if they were at a quilting, while a few plied their needles with grave faces, as if duly impressed with the holy significance of the work upon which they were engaged. Among them was Aunt Polly, now two months a bride, after many years of courtship. There was a serious yet almost exultant look in her eyes as they dwelt fondly on the pale face of her husband.

"Maybe it 's wicked, but I can't help feelin' glad you can't go," she whispered.

"It would be hard for us to part, dear child, but no harder than for many others," he said sadly, "and it 's hard to stay behind when you can't tell folks just why."

"The folks that don't know will give any reason but the right one."

A pink and white cheeked, golden-tressed, and blue-eyed lass came over to the pair.

"Why, Mr. Mumpson, you hain't goin' tu waste your time makin' flags, be ye? Ain't you goin' tu enlist?" she simpered.

"No, Miss Nancy, I don't think I shall enlist," the schoolmaster answered quietly, with a sad smile.

Nancy Barnes opened her blue eyes. "Why, I don't see haow a man can help it, they du look so neat all dressed up in the' uniforms. I see a hul snag on 'em daown tu the Fair last fall, as much as fifty, an' they did look splendid, — only the' clo'es was gray — blue 's ever so much pootier. Jes' look a' that leftenant 'at 's 'listin' of 'em! My! hain't he jest lovely? I tol' Jim I would n't never speak tu him nor yet look at him agin if he did n't go." She blushed to a rosier hue, and simpered a sillier smile. "Why,

Mis' Mumpson, I should think you 'd make Mr. Mumpson go!"

"He gen'ally does what he thinks is best," Polly answered, rather stiffly, with an evident wish to end the conversation. But Nancy was of no such mind.

"Why, he hain't tew old, is he?" she asked, with a sneer. "He 'pears tu be well 'nough tu git 'raound an' eat his meals when he 's boardin'. I hope he hain't 'feard! Oh, I hate a coward. He need n't be, for pa says they 'll settle it all up in a month. They won't fight."

The schoolmaster's pale face flushed scarlet, and his wife flashed out angrily at his insulter. "He a coward! It 's a lie! You don't know what you 're sayin', Nancy Barnes. He 'd go fast enough if he could without my sendin' him, but not tu strut 'raound in blue clo'es. He knows there 'll be fightin' enough, an' that 's what he 'd go for. I would n't da'st tu send him, as you have Jim, poor boy. S'posin' he never comes back, as many a one never will, — I would n't be in your shoes."

The pink of Nancy's cheeks faded all to

white, and she beat a hasty retreat from the angry fire of Polly's eyes.

Through the open door, as Sam and his boy entered, came the songs of robins, and the long-drawn sweetness of a lark's note from the nearest meadow mingled in the soft April air with the martial din of fife and drum, sounds of gentle peace and dreadful war strangely blended.

"Why, Aunt Polly," said Sammy, noting the scared face of the retreating girl and the wrathful one of his young aunt, "has the fightin' begun to home, an' amongst the women?"

"I suppose they 're all in a hurrah daown tu the village? Many 'listin'?" Huldah asked, as the family sat at supper that evening.

"Why, yes, tol'able many," Sam admitted. Something in his look and tone made Huldah's heart stand still.

"Oh, Samwil, hev you?" she faltered, and Sam nodded his head gravely.

"You would n't think much on me if I did n't, Huldy."

"I know, but it seems as if the' was enough others."

"S'posin' they all said so."

"The Lord bless you and all," and she bowed her head.

"Peltier has, tew; an' Billy Wiggins, an' John Dart, an' young Tom Hamlin, an' he hain't but eighteen," said Sammy.

"So young," sighed Huldah, laying her hand on her tall son's shoulder. "But they can't have my big boy yet. He must ta' care o' mammy an' his sister an' brother."

"But, mother," Sammy said; and then with some pride, "I — I hev 'listed. I thought you 'd want me to go with daddy."

Huldah groaned aloud, and Sam choked with conflicting emotions.

"Oh, must I give you both up?" she gasped, and she and Aunt Jerusha retired to hide their womanly tears.

When the company was full Sam was unanimously elected captain, and Pelatiah first lieutenant, greatly to the disgust of Mr. Danforth. Poor Mr. Mumpson was rejected for physical disability, and consoled himself with the increased love and respect of Polly, and

in teaching the Danvis youth a new lesson.

There were a few days of hurried preparation before the Danvis volunteers bade sad farewell to home and loved ones, and went into camp with their regiment in the town where the First Vermont troops were mustered. For several it was their first railroad journey, and new and strange experiences followed thick and fast. These humble, unknown men were suddenly become the observed of all observers, and the pets of fine ladies and gentlemen. Accustomed all their lives to come and go at their own sweet will, they were now subjected to rigid discipline and unquestioning obedience to men formerly of their own station. It came hard at first to show due deference to the gold lace and buttons of new-made brigadiers who were yesterday village lawyers, now far more impressed with their new dignity than were the modest gentlemen of the regular army who came to set the rude machinery into smoothly working action.

The half of Danvis came to see its soldier boys in camp, to admire them on parade, to

pity their hardships of sleeping on straw under canvas, drinking creamless coffee from tin cups, and eating monotonous pork and beans off tin plates, and to wonder how heroically they bore it all.

Then came the final farewell to the people, the green fields and bright streams of their beloved Vermont, to the grand landmarks of the towering mountains fading to fainter blue farther and farther behind. Then the proud march through great cities, gay with innumerable banners, amid applauding crowds, and the coming at last under sunny Southern skies to the scenes of real, dreadful war, — the thunder of cannon booming from afar, the sight of wounded men fresh from the first skirmishes, and thereat the sickening fear that untried courage might fail at the actual test. Now came camp life in earnest, — the awful loneliness of the picket line, weary marches and bivouacs in rain and mire, with scant rations and sometimes none at all, — and usually to no purpose. Letters came from them to the friends at home, and were opened with dread, then read with devout thanks that they brought no evil tidings. The good

schoolmaster wrote letters full of cheer and neighborhood news to the few who had no near friends at home, and got many a silent, heartfelt blessing in return.

One day, Uncle Lisha, exempt by age from all labor, came back from his semi-weekly trip to the post office, leaning heavily on his staff, and led by Sam's second boy, his present constant comrade, and brought a letter from Sam that told of a great movement of the Army of the Potomac about to take place. For all its hopefulness there were solemn words in it that might be a long farewell, and Huldah's always anxious heart was very heavy. How anxiously all waited for news, only those know who have suffered a like experience. Then came rumors, then assured tidings, of an overwhelming disaster to the army, and then many days of fear and hope and suspense, while word of the loved ones was waited for. With what devout thanksgiving was it received at last, news that they were all unharmed and free. Many more such seasons were to be passed through, and a continuous heartache to be endured, before the brave regiment fought its way to final

victory and the cruel war was ended. When it returned with thinned ranks and torn banners and boys grown to bearded veterans, it brought safely back its members to the Lovel household, but the humble hero Pelatiah, tenderly remembered by his Danvis friends and comrades, sleeps under the alien sod of Virginia. Every year there are flowers on Loizy's grave for his sake.

Old men and women are they all now who survive, to whom the memory of that cruel war is a troubled dream, its sorrows softened by the kindly hand of Time, many of its hopes unfulfilled.

The Riverside Press
Electrotyped and printed by H. O. Houghton & Co.
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